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**The Ancient Britons and the Roman Invasions 55BC-  
61AD: An Analysis of Tribal Resistance and  
Response.**

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**December 2003.**

**A thesis submitted towards the degree of Master of Arts of Massey  
University.**

## **ABSTRACT.**

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the response to the Roman invasions of 55BC to 61AD from the tribal groupings of southern Britain. Much has been written of the activities of the Roman commanders and soldiers, but this thesis looks to analyse this period of invasion from the position of the tribes of southern Britain.

The opening chapters will provide a descriptive account of the land and people who occupied southern Britain and a survey of tribal response to the Roman invasions. The reasons behind the differing responses to Rome will be offered with an analysis of the tribal politics that existed in southern Britain between Caesar's invasions of 55-54BC and the Claudian invasion of 43AD.

Three case studies consider the central response to the Roman incursions. The first looks at the resistance offered to Caesar by the British warlord Cassivellaunus. The second case study highlights the initial response to Rome in 43AD by Caratacus and his brother Togodumnus. Following the initial fighting to stop the Roman invasion, Caratacus moved westward to carry on resistance to Rome in Wales. This thesis will follow those steps and will discuss the next stage of Caratacus' response. The third case study explores the Icenic revolt of 60AD under the warrior queen Boudicca.

The case studies allow comparisons between three periods of military response. Analysis of these three case studies enables the identification of a British tribal style of fighting while discussing the successes and failures of these tactics.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.**

No one person achieves anything without support from those around him or her. I have been extremely privileged by having immense support in this project.

Firstly I wish to thank my partner Zenaida, who has been a tower of strength and amazing in her support of this project and me. I also thank our two daughters who have been driving forces in their own unique ways.

I wish to extend gratitude to both my sets of parents, Joy and Alan Papprell, Richard and Jeannine Bradley and close family, who have always shown total support.

I also extend respect and thanks to my supervisor, Dr John Tonkin-Covell. I give my appreciation to Dr Glyn Harper and General Piers Reid (Retired) for allowing me to explore warfare in Iron Age Britain. I would also like to thank Mr Rex Volkerling, Mr Paul Stichbury, Dr Jeff Sluka, Dr Chris Dixon, Mr Basil Poff and Dr Norman Austin for enthusiasm, encouragement and inspiration.

Finally I thank (RSM, SP, GM, NC, JD, RMJM, DB, P&DH, MM, PWA, P&MB, NH) who have offered inspiration and support throughout.



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## INTRODUCTION

*'Not much of the summer was now left, and winter sets in early in these regions because all this side of Gaul faces north. Nevertheless I went ahead with plans for an expedition to Britain. I knew that in nearly all our campaigns in Gaul, help had come to the enemy from Britain.'* Caesar.<sup>1</sup>

With these words Gaius Julius Caesar opened the chapter in his *War Commentaries* accounting for the first invasion of Britain. This incursion would bring the tribal peoples of Britain into contact with the Roman war machine.

The aim of this thesis is to explore Iron Age British military response to Roman invasion. The period covered in this thesis is from 56BC, when British tribal warriors crossed the Channel to support Gallic tribes of Armorica in their resistance to Gaius Julius Caesar prior to his first move into Britain, and finishes in 60AD when, after seventeen years of Roman rule, the client kingdom of the Iceni and other tribes rose in revolt under the leadership of Boudicca.

Between 56BC and 60AD the tribes of Britain went through a series of political and economic changes that had an impact on their ability to respond to Roman invasion. Caesar's moves into Gaul and his invasion of Britain in 55BC is a point in history where British tribal response to Rome began.

The military response to Caesar and then the tactics used against the Claudian invasion of 43AD are well attested and provide historical details from which to draw comparisons while identifying British tribal fighting styles. The rebellion of 60AD led by Boudicca also offers an example of Iron Age warfare used in Britain against the Roman administrative authority.

Caesar's observation that British warriors seemed to give aid to the Gauls in all his campaigns became one of the reasons for crossing the Channel, in an attempt to punish these British warriors while undertaking a reconnaissance of the western boundary of the known world.<sup>2</sup>

The prospect of warriors from Britain helping Gallic tribes highlights an environment of cross-Channel contact. This has given strength to the idea put forward by some scholars of pan-tribal/Celtic resistance to Rome and this assumption will be questioned within this thesis.<sup>3</sup>

Following Caesar's raids and withdrawal, southeast Britain moved towards forms of statehood and powerful tribal dynasties emerged that dominated most of southeast Britain. By the middle of the first century AD, the Emperor Claudius launched a full-scale invasion of Britain, which was followed by the swift submission of the tribes in the southeast and the start of a process of Romanisation. Resistance to invasion continued in the west and in 60AD the province was rocked by a bloody revolt. The submission of this rebellion effectively ended resistance by Iron Age Britons in the southeast.

The classical Roman historians dedicated much written text to the people who lived to the north of the Italian peninsula. Caesar wrote on the Iron Age Europeans that he came across as he invaded Gaul and Britain. The people he found there left no written history of their own and thus accounts of ancient western European history was written by Romans and Greeks who saw the Iron Age people of western Europe primarily as a military threat while also viewing their proximity to the classical world.

Caesar's war commentaries are unique in the sense that they introduced written accounts of the Gallic and, more important to this thesis, the British styles of warfare from a Roman commander's perspective. The works of Cassius Dio

and Tacitus describe Britain at the time of the Claudian invasion and during the reign of Nero.<sup>4</sup> Suetonius' work on the twelve Caesars gives an insight into the attitudes of the Romans and their rulers with regard to the people of Iron Age Britain, while highlighting events that shaped frontier policies in the west.<sup>5</sup>

The scope of this thesis is to look at how the Iron Age people of Britain responded to Roman invasion and not how the Romans fought these tribal people on their western frontier. While one would expect a degree of bias from these classical writers, their accounts do provide insights into the tribal peoples and their attitudes at a time of invasion and conquest. The classical writers provide a base of primary sources for this thesis.

Modern historical scholarship on Iron Age society have used other disciplines to gain a clearer understanding of ancient Britain while also enabling scholars to confirm or refute some of the long accepted classical accounts. Archaeological evidence and findings have been used in researching the topic and themes of this thesis.

Prominent archaeologists such as Barry Cunliffe and John Wachter have provided a vast wealth of information on the period covered within this work along with other scholars in this field. Cunliffe, in his book *Iron Age Communities in Britain*, has given the field of Iron Age study an invaluable piece of work on the communities of this period.<sup>6</sup> Wachter has done much work on Roman Britain and covers the period when the tribal groups fought to resist invasion.<sup>7</sup>

Historians in the fields of ancient and Celtic studies have also provided much useful material and analysis on the period, such as Peter Beresford Ellis, Lloyd and Jennifer Laing, Graham Webster, John Peddie, and Ian Richmond.<sup>8</sup>

Webster in particular has done invaluable work on the invasion period and the resistance to Roman incursions.

Webster's three volume series, *The Roman Invasion of Britain, Rome against Caratacus and Boudica: The British revolt against Rome AD60*, provide a sound base on which to build the three case studies used in this thesis to analyse the Iron Age responses to the Roman invasions of 55 and 54BC and 43AD.<sup>9</sup>

Peddie provided a historical and military complement to the works of Wachter and focused on the Roman army, the invasion and logistical element to the invasions undertaken by Caesar and then under Claudius.<sup>10</sup> Like Caesar, Peddie writes with the insight of a soldier. The discipline of historical geography and linguistics have also provided information in helping to create a clearer and broader picture of Iron Age Britain at the time of Roman invasion.

For the purpose of this thesis the peoples of Iron Age Britain will be called Britons, or, when necessary, by their tribal names. The geographical area they lived in will be called Britain. These people lived in the areas of ancient Britain that are now modern Wales and the south and southeast of England. The northern border of this geographical area cuts from the Trent River across to the Mersey, down the western coast of Wales in the west and from the Trent in the east to Land's End.

To begin with, there will be a brief survey of the British people prior to Caesar's raids and a look at the geo-political map of southeast Britain that evolved up to the invasion of 43AD. The social fabric of the Britons will be discussed and its importance to their ability to wage war against the Romans. The social hierarchy and the roles members played within the tribal framework will also be discussed in the first chapter.

The geographical environment was important for sustaining tribal populations and therefore equally important for the provision of warriors and the conduct of military

campaigns. The geographical environment is one of the constants of any theatre of war and had a huge impact on the way the Britons fought. The impact and its relationship to the style of tribal warfare used will be discussed.

A brief survey of the physical make-up of the British warrior will be given to identify how Iron Age Britons fought and the equipment they used. This survey will draw on both classical accounts and the findings from archaeological excavations, while also looking at the images left on stone and bronze-work dedication plaques, coinage and monuments.

Response to Roman invasion will be analysed on a tribe-by-tribe basis while noting the existence of tribal confederations employed to resist Rome and to gauge the success or failure of such arrangements. This study will look at tribal resistance with a view to establishing the extent to which responses varied. The motivations and influencing factors such as tribal survival or economic necessity in tribal decision-making with regard to their response will be discussed and analysed, testing the notion of pan-tribal/Celtic resistance to Roman invasion.

Much work has been done on the Romans and their quest for domination of the known world. Within this period, from the control of Italy and the Mediterranean to the conquest of Gaul and south eastern Britain, hundreds of independent tribal groups and peoples lived and their passing is often recorded with nothing more than a few lines in a classical account of a prominent Roman of the time. Other classical accounts are the words of writers who looked at the peoples of Iron Age Europe with distinctly Mediterranean and sometimes-hostile eyes. This thesis will seek to highlight Iron Age British military responses to the Roman invasion by analysing the events, actions and motivations of these tribal peoples.

The period between 56BC and 60AD was a time of conquest and resistance and three case studies will be used to explore, in more detail, British resistance to Roman invasion. The campaigns of Cassivellaunus in 54BC, Caratacus in 43-51AD and the Iceni revolt led by Boudicca in 60AD will be used to compare military response while also identifying military tactics and leadership qualities and fighting style.

The first case study looks at Cassivellaunus who led a tribal confederation of Britons against Caesar in 54BC and classical accounts have left much that can be scrutinised to show the fighting style of the tribal warriors and Cassivellaunus' leadership. This first case study will explore the use of the natural surroundings by Cassivellaunus while identifying his method of war and response, with some focus on the use of the chariot and deployment. The accounts Caesar left of his raids into Britain will be drawn on while also considering archaeological evidence and the work of ancient, Iron Age and Celtic scholars to research this period of initial Roman military contact and response.

The second case study has two components; the first covers the invasion of 43AD and the tribal responses to it under the leadership of Caratacus and his brother Togodumnus. The second follows the campaign of Caratacus who was forced into the west after the quick fall of the southeast to the Romans. Webster's works on this period will be utilised, along with analysis of the classical writers. Tacitus, Cassius Dio and Suetonius will be referred to in covering the second phase of Britain's incorporation into the Roman Empire.

In this second case study, the first component begins with a brief introduction to the geo-political map of southeastern Britain with particular reference to the Catuvellauni. It will also provide some detailed observations on the dynastic



politics of the Catuvellaunian chief, Cunobelin and the resistance offered by his two sons Caratacus and Togodumnus. Analysis of the tactics used by these two chiefs will be followed by an account of their defence of the river Medway and the problems of leading a confederated tribal army.

The second part traces Caratacus' retreat to the west and his further resistance that drew the Welsh tribes into military contact with the Roman invaders. An analysis of Caratacus' fighting style will be followed by a summing up of his successes and failures.

The third case study deals with the Iceni revolt of 60AD that saw the Roman province attacked by a confederation of tribal war bands under the Icenian queen Boudicca. The background and reasons for the revolt will be discussed along with the series of events that unfolded. The tactics used and their successes and failures will be analysed while a survey of the effect the revolt had on the province will be given.

Again, Tacitus and Dio have left accounts of the Boudiccan revolt, which provide contemporary commentary on an event that shook the new Roman province. Their accounts assist in establishing the nature of the military response by the various tribal groups during the last stage of the Roman invasion and stabilisation of the southeast. The tactics used in 60AD and the final battle that drew the Boudiccan revolt to a close will be compared with the tactics and fighting styles of the previous case studies. This will provide comparisons to determine whether there was a continuation and development of British tactical skill, or a departure from what had gone before.

The conclusion will analyse the period of resistance to Roman invasion. It will present the findings of the questions raised in this thesis, while identifying commonality or

differences in the responses, attitudes and motivations in dealing with the Roman invasion of Britain. The conclusion will attempt to identify a common fighting style within the tribal armies and leadership.

Using the accounts of classical scholars is problematic as their views were those of outsiders concerning the social functions and activities of the tribal peoples of Iron Age Britain. With the aid of archaeology and historical geography however, these classical sources are useful starting points from which to begin analysis of tribal response to military attacks from without.

Caesar's account of his raids on Britain provides its first recorded military leader in Cassivellaunus; it also gives first hand information on the socio-political make-up of southeast Britain. Archaeological evidence has supported a lot of what Caesar wrote and has influenced scholarship up to the present time.



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Reference Notes, Introduction.

<sup>1</sup> Caesar. *War Commentaries of Caesar*. Translated by R. Warner. New York, Mentor Books. 1960, Book IV, 2.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Some scholarship uses emotive language to offer reasons of kin-ties to explain the presence of British warriors fighting in Gaul. See P. B. Ellis *Caesar's Invasion of Britain*. London, Orbis Publishing. 1978 p. 10. Peddie refers to the Gauls as 'continental cousins' See J. Peddie *Conquest: The Roman Invasion of Britain*. Gloucestershire, Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd. 1997, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example C. Dio *Dio's Roman History: Volume I-VIII*. London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1961. Tacitus. *The Annals and the Histories*. Translated by A.J. Church & W.J. Brodribb. New York, Washington Square Press. 1964.

<sup>5</sup> G. Suetonius. *The Twelve Caesars*. Translated by R. Graves. London, Penguin Group. 1979.

<sup>6</sup> B. Cunliffe. *Iron Age Communities in Britain: An Account of England, Scotland and Wales from the Seventh Century BC until the Roman Conquest*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. 1975. Cunliffe has released more works on this period. See Bibliography for a full listing of his other works.

<sup>7</sup> J. Wachter. *The Coming of Rome*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. 1979. See Bibliography for a full listing of his works.

<sup>8</sup> See secondary sources in this work's bibliography.

<sup>9</sup> G. Webster. *Rome against Caratacus*. London, B.T.Batsford Ltd. 1981. *The Roman Invasion of Britain*. New Jersey, Barnes & Noble Books. 1980. *Boudica: The British Revolt against Rome AD60*. London, B.T.Batsford Ltd. 1978. See Bibliography for a full listing of his works.

<sup>10</sup> Peddie. 1997.

**CHAPTER I**  
**THE IRON AGE CULTURE OF SOUTHERN BRITAIN**  
**55BC TO 61 AD.**

*'The interior of Britain is inhabited by people who claim,  
on the strength of their own tradition, to be indigenous. The  
coastal areas are inhabited by invaders who crossed from  
Belgium for the sake of plunder and then, when the  
fighting was over, settled there and began to work the land.'*

Caesar.<sup>1</sup>

To understand British Iron Age military responses to Roman invasion between 55BC and 61AD, it is important to look at the Iron Age culture and the people who lived in Britain. This chapter will consider the Iron Age people geographically, their social and political structure, their economy, their attitude to war and the way in which they fought.

The Iron-age inhabitants of western Europe (modern France and Belgium) and Britain were separated groupings of people defined along both ethnic and cultural lines. The British Isles evolved within the framework of the European Iron Age and constituted the final destination for the westward movement of peoples and political and technological ideas from the continent. The western European Iron Age (from 700BC-43AD approximately) followed the Later Bronze Age (from 900BC).<sup>2</sup> Bronze Age technology and design however, remained strong in Britain well into the Iron Age. By the first century BC the Britons shared an Iron Age culture, elements of which were seen across most of Europe.<sup>3</sup>

This culture has been called Celtic and defined by the cultural traditions of technological change and artistic style

characterised by the Hallstatt (1200-475BC) and La Tène periods (500BC-1st century AD).<sup>4</sup> The Hallstatt period embraced late Bronze Age and early Iron Age Europe (including non-Celtic peoples) while the La Tène period carried through from the early Iron Age to the Roman Iron Age (distinctly Celtic).<sup>5</sup>

Linguistic evidence points strongly to the Danube as the origins of Celtic-speaking peoples. Ellis notes that there is 'a strong continuation of Celtic place-names in this area, which weakens as one radiates from its central point.'<sup>6</sup> He then suggests that the Celtic people of this area were an aboriginal population. By the sixth century much of Europe had been 'Celtized', that is, they spoke a form of Celtic the language family.<sup>7</sup>

Hallstatt and La Tène innovations seen in art design and decoration, reached the British Isles. These can be seen in the numerous archaeological finds and sites across Britain.<sup>8</sup> The Iron Age people of Britain maintained a degree of insularity and a continuation of culture that was enhanced by the Hallstatt and La Tène innovations, not replaced by them. The people of Iron Age Britain shared cultural and technological commonality with their European neighbours while developing regional variations known as 'insular La Tène'.<sup>9</sup>

At the height of the Bronze and Iron Ages there was an expansion of Hallstatt and then La Tène culture. This stretched from the western isles of Britain through France, Switzerland and along the Danube and east into central Asia Minor (modern Turkey), from Spain in the south to Belgium in the north. Hallstatt and La Tène fashions were common yet there was much regional variation.

Regional variations also existed with regards to the languages spoken and the people of Iron Age Britain spoke forms of Celtic. This was a branch of the Indo-European language group referred to as 'insular Celtic'.<sup>10</sup> In the British

Isles today there exist continuations of these ancient Celtic languages. They are broken up into two distinct groups, Goidelic and Brythonic. Irish/Scots Gaelic and Manx represent Goidelic Celtic, while the Brythonic branches are heard in Welsh and Cornish.<sup>11</sup>

Linguistic and historical scholars believe that the languages spoken by the tribal groupings in Wales and the southeast of Britain on the eve of Roman invasion were variations of Brythonic dialects. These evolved into modern day Welsh, Cornish and Breton.<sup>12</sup>

At the time of Caesar's invasions, the people of Britain, while having a shared linguistic tradition, showed much ethnic diversity. Gaul and the Iberian Peninsula have been identified as points of origin or pathways for westward moving people who would have found other migrant and indigenous people occupying Britain when they arrived.<sup>13</sup> These waves of migration would have added to the ethnic mix of the people in Britain.

One element in the ethnic mix within Iron Age Britain was the Belgic origin of, and influence over, some of the tribes in southeast Britain. The Belgic element had come across the Channel from Gaul and their influence can be divided into three areas: those who were definitely Belgic, those who were not, and those whose Belgic or earlier origin is unclear.

The tribes who definitely fell outside the area of Belgic influence were the Welsh who appear to have had more in common with those of Ireland and the Cornish peninsula, than southeast Britain and Gaul. The Durotriges, Dumnonii, Dobunni, and the Coritani were also of non-Belgic origin. These tribes had minimal contact through trade with southeastern Britain, however they maintained cultural and political development outside of Belgic influence. The Dumnonii and their Durotrige neighbours however saw

groups of Armorican (continental) refugees entering their lands after 56BC and seem to have absorbed them.<sup>14</sup>

Peoples of Belgic origin crossed from Gaul to Britain in the first century BC, as Caesar wrote, to raid and then stay, and evidence in coins, pottery and burials point to Gallic migrations from as early as 150BC.<sup>15</sup> The size of these migrations has been debated and new research and excavations have shown that some of the earlier assumptions are being readdressed. Some British traditions, that were originally thought to have been rooted in the Iron Age, have their origins in the Bronze Age, while some Belgic traditions have post 54BC and 43AD beginnings.<sup>16</sup>

There was, however, in the southeast an integration of Gallic and British elites who sought to carve out power bases that developed into the larger tribal groupings that were the approximate political tribal boundaries of Iron Age Britain at the time of the Roman invasion.<sup>17</sup> Whether there was large tribal invasion or small-scale elite migration, Belgic influence in Britain clearly existed and an obvious example was the tribal grouping of the Atrebates.

Commius was a continental Atrebatian chief who played an interesting role in the dealings of Caesar in Britain and seems to have moved between Gaul and Britain with relative ease (as he did in his allegiance to the Romans) without losing any of his tribal standing or authority. The Atrebates represent a large-scale migration of peoples from the continent at the time of Caesar's invasion of Gaul and were enhanced by the arrival of Commius after 52BC.<sup>18</sup> There were Atrebatian tribal groupings on both sides of the Channel and Caesar noted Commius' movement between, and authority over, the two.<sup>19</sup>

If there were other recent Belgic groupings in Britain prior to 43AD then there would have been more cases of mass migration across southeastern Britain represented in the



sharing of tribal names across the Channel. Outside the area of study on the eastern flank of the Brigantes for example, lived the Parisi whose tribal name was shared with the Gallic Parisi of the Seine Valley.<sup>20</sup> The Atrebates and the Parisi are the only known examples of this.

Two factions of the Atrebate tribal groupings were the Regni and Belgae. The Regni was the Roman name given to the southern Atrebates after 43AD and represented a post-conquest political *civitas* ruled by the pro-Roman Cogidubnus.<sup>21</sup> The Belgae had continental origins and represent a western faction of the Atrebates that showed hostility to Rome even after the campaign of Vespasian in 43AD and may have been the second tribe that submitted to the commander of the II legion.<sup>22</sup>

The Belgae did not exist as a tribe in Gaul, but Caesar did list them as a grouping of tribes when describing the people of Gaul. He wrote that 'Gaul consists of three separate parts, one of which is inhabited by the Belgae, one by the Aquitani, and one by the people whom we call "Gauls".<sup>23</sup>

The arrival of the Belgae in the lands of the Atrebate may have increased the fighting strength of that tribe, attested to by their economic rise as a counter to the Catuvellauni, and provided motivation for the Durotriges to the west to refortify their hill forts to defend against this new folk on their border.

Continental contact was strong between the Durotriges and some Amorican tribes such as the Veneti, the Coriosolites, the Osismii, the Baiocasses and the Abrincatui.<sup>24</sup> Evidence of trade goods and the adoption of military tactics, discussed below, suggests this. Yet this tribe resisted any influence from Belgic elements and developed their own strong native tradition between the invasions of Caesar and Claudius.

The eastern Durotrigian border (the Avon River) appeared to have been the western most point of Belgic expansion and conflict across this border could have represented a strong tribal and ethnic division. It is an assumption that the Durotriges and the newly arrived Belgae/Atrebatian tribal grouping may have seen each other as culturally different and as a military threat to each other's tribal autonomy.

The southeastern Cantiaci of Kent were geographically closer to the continent and thus one of the first obvious contacts for any people migrating from Gaul. The distribution of Gallo-Belgic coinage in the area of the Cantiaci begins from around 150BC and carried on down to the mid-fifties BC.<sup>25</sup> This corresponds with historical linkages in trade to the continent, be it goods, mercenaries, ideas or technology. The close proximity to the continent may have caused problems in creating a centralised power base. Piracy activities and the continued movement of people may have equally disrupted any moves towards centralisation, like that seen north of the Thames.

The lands of the Iceni on the eastern coast of Britain would also have been a prime-landing place for northern Belgic immigrants. Belgic origins of the Iceni have been traced to the people of Belgium and Holland who migrated to Britain around 500BC, with the further migration of a warrior elite in 150BC.<sup>26</sup>

To what degree the Iceni were Belgic by 43AD is not clear, however Frere believes that if not wholly Belgic they were at least ruled by a semi-Belgic elite at that time.<sup>27</sup> The Iceni were a wealthy tribe who remained detached from the resistance to Rome in 55 and 54BC or during the Roman invasion of 43AD, rallying to neither Belgic nor non-Belgic neighbours in response to Rome's moves into Britain.

The Catuvellauni and Trinovante are of uncertain origin with regard to their native or Belgic heritage. Initially both tribes were, because of coin and ceramic finds, seen as distinctly Belgic; but further study questioned this assumption and much debate has followed. Webster names the Catuvellauni and Trinovantes as Belgic, having migrated to Britain from Gaul in the first century BC, while Branigan questions whether the Catuvellauni were Belgic or even existed as a tribal entity prior to 55BC.<sup>28</sup> Caesar wrote that the tribes of the interior (which would include those people who became the Catuvellauni) claimed an indigenous tradition.<sup>29</sup>

Concentrations of Gallo-Belgic A, B and E coinage in the land of the Trinovantes shows Belgic influence.<sup>30</sup> Further evidence that the Trinovantes may have had Belgic origins is seen with the arrival of Gallic refugees (possibly Bellovaci) around 56BC who, with the existing population pushed further inland north of the Thames.<sup>31</sup>

The Thames inlet and estuary would, like the lands of the Cantiaci and Iceni, have been natural landfalls for migrating peoples regardless of their numbers. The possibility of a Gallic warrior elite establishing themselves along the northern banks of the Thames is a possibility and one could surmise that the conflict recorded by Caesar between the Trinovante and Cassivellaunus and then consolidation of Tasciovanus might be a non-Belgic reaction to the arrival of Belgic refugees in the area.

The issue of Belgic and non-Belgic ethnicity does not seem to have obviously affected fighting styles within the tribal war bands that faced the Romans. The response to the Roman army in Britain was varied; however whether these variations can be traced to Belgic and non-Belgic factors is not so clear and will be discussed below.

The physical geography and weather in Britain during the Iron Age was as equally varied as the people who lived there. These factors played a large part in the conducting of military campaigns in Britain and the warriors used the terrain to maximise their response to Roman invasion.

The weather in Iron Age Britain was much as it was at the end of the second millennium, with prevailing westerly, depressions, ridges of high pressure and good rainfall, testimony of this given by the extensive river systems.<sup>32</sup> Some of these rivers would be pivotal in tribal tactics used against the Romans.

The temperature was varied with an estimated average in July of >15.5 degrees Celsius and an average rainfall of between 630mm and 1000mm per year. Wales however, had a higher annual rainfall of between 761mm to 2500mm.<sup>33</sup> Both Southeastern and western Britain received snow averages from fewer than five days per year in the southeast to over ten days per year in Wales.<sup>34</sup>

Extensive areas of Britain were covered in large forests, and these consisted of oak, elm, ash and lime, birch and pine, with wetlands supporting willow and alder. The thick woods also sheltered blackthorn, hawthorn, brambles and wild roses.<sup>35</sup> These provided natural barriers to the Romans who marched westward to fight the tribal armies. Forests were to prove an important factor in tribal warfare, as both obstacles and refuges.

Living within the confines of and beyond the great forests were a large variety of wildlife ranging from boar, wolves and eagles to wild oxen, deer, foxes, hare and badgers.<sup>36</sup> The wild life of the forests of Britain potentially provided the warriors and tribal elite with resources for hunting either for food or sport. Hunting also represented an avenue through which warriors could train for raiding and war, in the exercise of tactical skill.

The river systems of Iron Age Britain were important geographical features and held both religious and economic importance while also providing communication and food resources. Many still have their ancient names, the Avon, Exe, Thames, Ouse and the Wye showing a linguistic continuation from the Bronze and Iron Ages.

Most of the major rivers in Britain corresponded with the accepted tribal boundaries. As already stated the Avon separated the Durotriges and the Atrebates. The Thames served as a boundary between the Catuvellauni and the Cantiaci to their east, the Atrebates to their south and the Dobunni to their west.

The Britons also saw the Channel and the river system as aquatic roadways on which trade goods and communications travelled. The Britons also looked at their rivers as obstacles and often defended the far bank against Roman attacks, the best example being Cassivellaunus at the Thames in 54BC and Caratacus and Togodumnus at the Medway in 43AD.<sup>37</sup>

In the last two centuries BC the weather improved.<sup>38</sup> The introduction of iron axes and other Iron Age technology increased the ability to cut into the forests and clear land for the growing of crops and the rearing of domesticated livestock. Iron-tipped ploughs increased tilling capacity and therefore land production. This impacted on the communities of Britain and by the 1st century BC the population had rapidly increased to a substantial number of two and a half to three million people.<sup>39</sup> The cleared areas of Britain at this time were able to sustain large populations and thus increased a tribe's ability to field an army.

By the first century BC, the Iron Age people of Gaul were well in decline as regional tribal powers in the face of aggressive expansion from the Roman world to the southeast and the Germans to the east and northeast. Across the Channel, prior to 56BC the Britons were physically isolated

from the military success of Caesar in Gaul. These military successes created a period of huge social, cultural and political upheaval for the Gallic people.

Gaul and Rome had begun interaction from the La Tène period onwards.<sup>40</sup> Southern Gaul especially had been exposed to the classical world, first with the founding of the Greek colony of Massilia (600BC), and then with Gallic expansion into northern Italy (400BC). This was followed by Roman expansion into Spain during and after the second Punic war (218BC onwards). Rome used southern Gaul (Narbonensis) as its land route into the Iberian Peninsula.

Gallic contact with the classical world through trade and war, combined with the westward movement of Germanic peoples, made an impact on Gaul with an increase in migratory movements throughout the fourth and third century, continuing down to the first century BC.

The state of decline seen in Gaul was not reproduced in Britain on the same scale until after 43AD. However the movement of refugees, trade goods and ideas into Britain added some degree of stress to the fluid nature of British tribal politics and its effect on the reasons for resisting or supporting Roman invasion.

By the first century BC, the peoples from southern Germany throughout Gaul, to Britain were populations in a state of flux.<sup>41</sup> The Iron Age people of first century Western Europe were not united in the sense of having any idea of cultural commonality but were a collection of tribal groupings and small states.

Moving out from the Rhône were tribal groups in various states of social development. The Helvetii of Switzerland and the Aedui of the Auvergne Mountains (near Lyon) were, by the time of Caesar's invasion (58BC) adopting forms of statehood.<sup>42</sup> Some tribes of central Gaul had developed states controlled by kings and elected leaders that shows evidence

of methodical organization. Living between the Marne and the Seine were the Suessiones who were ruled by a king, while the northern Belgian Eburones had two rulers.<sup>43</sup> Some areas of southeast Britain were also moving towards similar degrees of statehood.

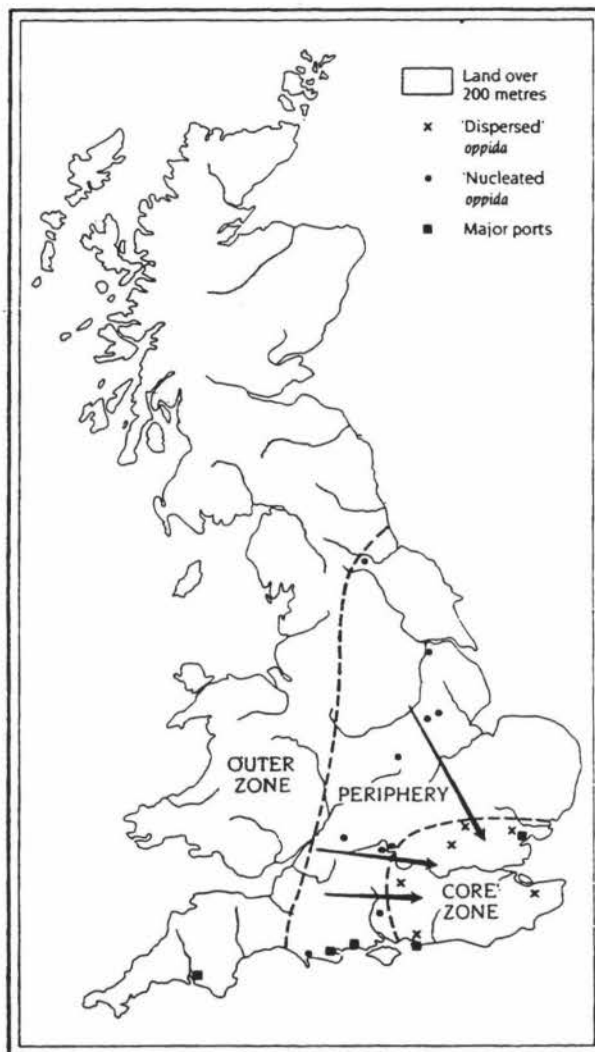
The political situation in Europe by the first century BC was one of constant change, with an undercurrent of inter-tribal warfare as groups jockeyed for control of natural resources and trade routes. In 55BC, Britain was also going through a period of political change.

Cunliffe talks of Britain changing to cope with folk movements around 100BC (Belgic migrations) and then reacting to Caesar's raids in 55 and 54BC. 'These two periods of crisis led to two different responses; the first seems to have encouraged fragmentation, giving rise to a number of warring factions, each concerned to carve out and maintain its own territory; while the second required national leadership'.<sup>44</sup>

In 54BC Cassivellaunus led a confederation of tribes to resist Caesar's invasion, while in 43AD the Catuvellauni also raised, but failed to hold, a united front against the Roman invasion. Not all tribes were willing to openly oppose Rome and others came over after tribal reversals on the battlefield. This shows the response to Roman invasion was varied. Some British tribes rushed to side with the Romans in 54BC and 43AD while others fought the invaders, and some remained totally detached.

Between 55BC and 43AD, parts of the southeast Britain went through political changes that mirrored patterns of tribal confederation seen in Gaul.<sup>45</sup> The British Catuvellauni and Cantiaci are two examples and all the major tribes of Britain trace their existence by 43AD to groupings of smaller tribes. The Brigantes were such a tribe as were the Iceni, Coritani, Durotriges and the Parisi.<sup>46</sup> This was a move, as seen in

Gaul, to control resources and the trade with the continent that was coming under the increasingly tight control of Rome by 52BC.



Map 2. Showing the three trade zones. (From P. Salway. *The Oxford Illustrated History of Roman Britain*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. 1993 p 29).



Some processes of tribal and state development in Gaul were of a nature that allowed for the voting in of tribal leaders, however in Britain tribal dynasties characterised the face of political control. The Catuvellauni rose to power, dominating much of southeast Britain under the dynasty begun by Tasciovanus. He was succeeded by his son Cunobelin who, in turn handed over tribal authority and leadership to his brother and sons.

The Trinovante and their quarrel with the Catuvellauni also suggest that dynastic rule was the accepted form of tribal control. Mandubracius sought to regain leadership over the Trinovante after his father Imanuentios had been killed by Cassivellaunus therefore claiming tribal leadership through a hereditary right.<sup>47</sup>

The Atrebates, from 52BC were also ruled dynastically under Commius who was succeeded by Tincommius and in turn by other family members. The Iceni also showed the potential for dynastic rule when Prasutagus attempted to pass the rule of the tribe and half his wealth on to his two daughters in 60AD. These dynasties influenced political events in Britain following Caesar's invasions and leading up to and beyond the Claudian invasion. They also added a political dimension to Roman diplomacy in Britain and had a great impact on the tribal responses to Roman invasion.

This fluid form of confederation seen in Britain was a move towards the loose centralization that Haselgrove describes as political structures of relatively small-scale corporate groups controlled by an elite. 'These basic units were also loosely linked together in wider culturally differentiated configurations by ties of clientage and shared ancestry.'<sup>48</sup>

The development of centralisation was economically driven and from 55BC to 43AD larger tribal groups became involved in trading partnerships. An example of this was the

Dobunni (occupying Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester) who traded and shared borders with the other major tribal groupings of southeastern Britain, the Catuvellauni, Trinovante and the Durotriges.<sup>49</sup>

During this time Iron Age Britain developed into distinct economic areas that Cunliffe has divided into three major zones, the core, the periphery and outer or beyond.<sup>50</sup> (See map, p22). The core zones incorporated the tribal groupings that enjoyed trade domination and gained wealth and power through their control of trade goods (the Catuvellauni/Trinovantes, the Atrebates and to a minor degree the Cantiaci).

Rome would have played an indirect role in the creation of these core zone power bases as they had control of the Gallic coast, important for the importation and exportation of trade goods. Through diplomatic links and trade concessions, Rome would have had a vested interest in keeping powerful tribes friendly to Rome. It would have been just as important to counter equally powerful or weaker tribes not so friendly to Rome. This can be seen in the support Rome gave to both the Atrebates and Catuvellauni who competed for the domination of southeastern Britain.

The periphery incorporated the tribal groupings that lay outside the core (the Iceni, Coritani, Dobunni and the Durotriges). The outer zone, or beyond, were the tribes even further out (the Dumnonii, Cornovii and the Welsh tribes). The movement of raw materials and trade items from the zones beyond, into the core would have been through the lands and trade mechanisms of the periphery tribes. The situation in each zone was fluid and at various stages of development.<sup>51</sup>

At the centre of the core zone by 43AD were the Catuvellauni whose domination of southeastern Britain had come at the expense of the Cantiaci, Trinovantes and the

Atrebates. The Dobunni to the west were also under pressure. This environment of political and economic competition would have a major influence on events in Britain during the Claudian invasion, while also influencing the military policies of the British tribes.

By AD43 the south east of Britain had reached a degree of stability through Cunobelin's control of many of the trade routes. Despite this veneer of political domination, division still existed that would have military implication in regard to the success of any united tribal resistance to Rome.

The political structure in Wales has been reconstructed from archaeological excavations undertaken in that area. The evidence that has been uncovered shows that Belgic and continental influences failed to infiltrate Wales until mid-first century AD, pointing to the continuation of indigenous origins.<sup>52</sup> Cunliffe believes that Wales was divided into a minimum of five tribal areas 'roughly approximating to broad geographical divisions and that the isolation of Wales from continental influences provided a degree of cultural continuity.'<sup>53</sup>

Links to Ireland and their geographical distance from Gaul suggest that the Welsh had a cultural identity free from Belgic influence with more contact westward, across the Irish Sea.<sup>54</sup> The Welsh tribes lay beyond the sphere of continental (Belgic) influence, but did however have contact, through the Cornovii with the east and may have had minimal contact with the neighbouring Dobunni, Catuvellauni and Coritani.

The tribal groupings in Wales were of a decentralized and autonomous nature and differed to the core zones in the southeast of Britain by 43AD. This major difference between decentralised and centralised political structures did not seem to change the cultural and social structure that characterized the Iron Age British society. The decentralised nature of the

Welsh tribes had military implications when Roman armies moved into these areas and faced these scattered tribal groupings. The centralised southeast fell quickly to Roman forces while the west maintained a protracted resistance.

Socially, the Britons appear to have had a very advanced system and culture that had quite distinct social divisions. Within this society 'each person belongs to a class. In the highest position were the nobles, people of great value to the community. In the lowest position were the bondservants, people who contributed little to the community'.<sup>55</sup> Archaeological excavations from gravesites have produced rich grave goods suggesting that different levels of society existed in some areas of Iron Age Britain.

The classical accounts of Iron Age peoples, archaeological evidence and comparisons drawn from native Celtic sources from Iron Age Ireland can be used to reconstruct the levels within British tribal societies.<sup>56</sup> The social structure of Iron Age Britain was based around a core kin group that was led by the socially elite. This early social structure has been described as a heroic, 'intelligent, complex, wealthy and accomplished family of societies'.<sup>57</sup>

Conventionally hill forts were seen as an obvious physical example of tribal authority and stratification within tribal units.<sup>58</sup> The centralised authority required to execute these kinds of projects may have come from a single power with stratified positions to enforce the wishes of a regional leader for common tribal goals on a surplus labour force.<sup>59</sup>

The issue that hill fort settlements represent the stratification of tribal societies has recently been questioned. Archaeological digs carried out at Danebury show an absence of a "chieftains house" and while only 57 per cent of the area has been explored it still remains the largest scale hill fort excavations in Britain. This offers some evidence

that not all Iron Age settlements in Britain were hierarchical.<sup>60</sup>

The top of British society was made up of elite noble families, and while it is believed that tribal leadership was dynastic, there was not necessarily direct descent of tribal authority within a single family, more that descent was open to the leading families.<sup>61</sup> This was seen in the post-Cunobelin period of the Catuvellauni in Britain (40BC), where members of leading families jockeyed for political domination of their tribal groups.<sup>62</sup>

In central Gaul, the Aedui had created a system of elected leaders as a vehicle for rule. The term 'magistrates' was used by Caesar to label this type of political structure he encountered.<sup>63</sup> The Aedui had a head magistrate or Vergobret elected by the leading nobles (or senate as Caesar noted), who wielded power of life or death.<sup>64</sup> The Suessiones of southern Belgica preferred the rule of a king while the northern Belgic Nervii had war leaders; the northeastern Treveri still had a paramount chief.<sup>65</sup>

These forms of political rule developed in some parts of southeast Britain. Tribal leadership, in comparison took on several forms in British society. There was leadership through kings and queens or chieftains and in some political structures, dual leadership as seen in the Coritani who provide evidence of possible dual or magistrate rule on coinage issued between 10-50AD.<sup>66</sup>

In the context of tribal military response, the rights of a tribe as a collective group in choosing to fight had an interesting impact on decision-making. In 55BC, Caesar noted that the Cantiaci had held his continental Atrebatian envoy, Commius, prisoner due to the wishes of the 'common people'.<sup>67</sup> This implies that any military action would have gone to some form of vote. Caesar also explained tribal factions existing as a safeguard against tyranny.<sup>68</sup> The

factional aspect of Iron Age society is well attested in Britain through classical accounts and is supported by evidence found on Iron Age coinage such as those attributed to Corio and Boduocus who both ruled factions of the Dobunni.<sup>69</sup>

Leaders in British tribal society held power of life and death over the people under them and there existed a complex kin-based legal system. Cherici supports the kin-based structure of tribal authority and states that the judicial system was based on a tradition of the extended family group.<sup>70</sup> Tribal connections made members obligated to any decisions passed by the tribal authority 'compliance was usually voluntary. If enforcement was necessary, the duty fell to the kin of the aggrieved party'.<sup>71</sup> Tribal authority was impartial in the sense that all were answerable to the laws of the tribe; however, the degree of punishment or compensation was determined by a person's status.<sup>72</sup>

British tribal law was based around the community and was extended to all members of the tribe, accounting for the sick, poor, old and orphaned.<sup>73</sup> Accounts of these groups being cared for by their tribe go as far back as 300BC.<sup>74</sup> The backbone of tribal law was to provide security for all those within a tribal group. The worst punishment to befall a member of the tribe, according to Caesar was to be banned from the tribal sacrifices. This also meant tribal exclusion and the withdrawal of legal standing or protection.<sup>75</sup>

The people of Iron Age Britain were colourful, wore jewellery and took great pride in their appearance. They are recorded as taking baths using soap and herbs to anoint their bodies and the people of Western Europe according to Diodorus Siculus have been credited with the invention of soap (*sopa*).<sup>76</sup>

Historical accounts by classical writers and images shown on engravings and stone reliefs give numerous images of what Britons wore. During the late Iron Age males wore

long-sleeved shirts or tunics and trousers (*bracae*). Women wore the *peplos*, a garment that consisted of two rectangular garments held together at the shoulder by a *fibula*. This type of clothing was practically suited to the climate, while it could be assumed that the wearing of trousers could also be attributed to the fact that Britons rode horses and chariots it is more likely to have been the cooler weather.<sup>77</sup>

The clothing of Britain and neighbouring lands was colourful, striking and fine<sup>78</sup> and garment production was quite advanced by 54BC, supported by Caesar's impression of the quality of the British cloak (*sagi*) and its prized status in Rome.<sup>79</sup> Tartan appears to have been worn by the British and examples were recorded in classical accounts and archaeological evidence from items found in bogs across Western Europe and Britain supports this.<sup>80</sup> This would have added to the colourful image of the Britons.

The position of women in Iron Age Britain was different to that of the women in Gaul and the classical world. The old pre-Christian law codes of Ireland (Brehon) that are believed to have developed from an Iron Age tradition suggest some degree of legal rights for women at most levels of society.<sup>81</sup> The Welsh law codes (Hywel Dda), while of a later period are also thought to have been of early origins and extended legal rights to women.<sup>82</sup>

Caesar discussed the system of marriage in Gaul where male and female provided equal shares to the marriage arrangement. The profits of such arrangements were kept separate and went to the survivor of the union.<sup>83</sup> The system in Gaul may have been carried into southeast Britain. Evidence in gravesites attests to the existence of high status women from the ruling elites who enjoyed good living standards within their communities that classical accounts also describe.



The Arras culture graves of eastern Yorkshire (third to first centuries BC) are examples of high status females and in Gaul rich female graves have been found at Vix, although of an earlier period (500BC).<sup>84</sup> Britain had a tradition of high status women who led their tribes in Boudica of the Iceni and Cartimandua of the Brigantes.<sup>85</sup> The existence of these two female rulers doesn't necessarily make this the norm in British society, and coinage does not clearly state gender and therefore doesn't confirm whether female rule was a common British tradition or not.

The dearth of recorded documentation on free and non-free women makes it difficult to study their role in Iron Age British society, but examples given in pre-Christian law show that women were provided for within the tribal grouping and had rights in the issues concerning marriage and divorce. In all officially recognised relationships, women retained a high degree of independence; this enabled them to control property and the choice of extramarital lovers.<sup>86</sup>

Women in Iron Age Britain did not live in a 'socially liberated paradise', but did enjoy more freedom than their Greek and Roman counterparts.<sup>87</sup> The leadership role of Boudica had important military implications and will be addressed below.

Children are often ignored when looking at the framework of society. Some information on children within British society does exist that helps to reconstruct their position within the tribe. Formal training called fosterage took place in British society and all children received a form of education according to their rank.<sup>88</sup> Both boys and girls went off to tribal relatives or as hostages to non-related tribal groups who provided their education. This would have established formal training while possibly creating the potential for or strengthening tribal alliances. Age-sets existed in British society where young males grew and



trained right up into manhood.<sup>89</sup> This could also have helped further maintain tribal alliances and may have been the basis for tribal war bands.

Another function within the ruling members of the tribe and the social elite were a group who have created much interest in Iron Age and 'Celtic' scholarship and non-academic studies. This group was the Druids. Any work on Druids is problematic, as there is very little information on them other than what some of the classical sources, like Caesar, wrote. Archaeology has left no evidence on this aspect of British culture. Written accounts fall under classical viewpoints or Irish and British records that compiled centuries later by Christian clergy.<sup>90</sup> Both classical writers and Christians would have looked at Druids through alien eyes.

Druids are believed to have held high positions within their tribal societies. Caesar wrote that they were drawn from the privileged classes, undertook lengthy training and were exempt from military service. They passed the judgement in disputes and elected a supreme Druid from their ranks at annual meetings held in the forest of Carnutes in central Gaul. Caesar believed that druidism originated in Britain and that those in Gaul wishing to become expert in druid lore would cross the Channel.<sup>91</sup>

Caesar's accounts would reflect the classical views of a group that may have been involved in many areas and at all levels of British and Gallic society. It has been suggested that Druids may have been visually indistinguishable in appearance from other tribal members, being fully integrated into their tribal group. Tribes may also have had their own Druidic groups.<sup>92</sup>

Many scholars believe there existed in Iron Age Gaul and Britain a pan-Druidic priesthood that maintained relative freedom of movement between tribal territories and held

considerable political power. Caesar's observations of the annual meeting and the required travel to Britain supports this. A degree of caution should, however be observed when making generalizations on pan-tribal Druidism.

There is evidence from classical sources that Iron Age tribal society put great importance on its semi-religious caste that, among other duties were the holders of the lore and law of the tribe. The impact of pan-tribal warfare must have made movement between warring tribal boundaries difficult. The risk of losing the holders of tribal knowledge and the suspicion Druids must have drawn from other tribal groups may have hindered the free movement by these people between tribes. The Druids may possibly have been a focus for superstitious attention.

Ross and Robins claim that Druids practiced magic, through spell and prayer to influence the outcome of battle.<sup>93</sup> This supports Tacitus who wrote about the attack by Paullinus on Anglesey (Mona) in 60AD where he observed Druids 'lifting up their hands to heaven, and pouring forth dreadful imprecations'.<sup>94</sup> While these events record the actions of Druids working against the Roman threat, any military capacity would surely have threatened any pan-tribal immunity Druids may have enjoyed in British Iron Age society.

Geography, distance, supernatural suspicion and the military function Druids held would have created problems with any move to set up a centralized Druidic organization under normal circumstances within Britain (tribal warfare and antagonism). An external threat may have created the climate to warrant limited centralized resistance like that directed from the island of Mona in the late 40s and early 50s AD.

One aspect of the tribal group that held great importance and linked to the Druids was the bard. This member was the

composer and teller of stories. The bard was also linked directly to the celebration of warfare, 'the ultimate repository of a warrior's fame and good name and of the exploits of the tribe or clan'.<sup>95</sup> To a warrior society that recorded events, lore and laws orally, the role of the storyteller would have been closely tied to the events of the tribe and the recounting of them while holding positions of privilege.

The tribal warriors who Caesar called 'knights', also held a privileged position within the ranks of the British social elite.<sup>96</sup> Warfare appears to have been an important component of everyday life in Iron Age Britain and it was through war that warriors gained both wealth and prestige. Archaeological evidence has left many examples of the energy these people dedicated to warfare and many burial goods and weapons show that the Britons took pride in their weapons and placed great importance on those who carried them.<sup>97</sup>

The warriors would lead tribal groups on raids and campaign and were expected to fight, leading by example. It was while raiding and on campaign that the warrior could gain a reputation by showing fellow warriors their ability in defeating an enemy or leading a successful military foray. Hunting would have also satisfied the warriors' desire to prove their bravery and strength while providing training and exercise.

The focus on the control of trade-goods, resources and trade routes created a general shift from the pursuit of war to the gaining wealth and prestige in southeastern Britain between 54BC and 43AD. Did this increase the need for full-time warriors to maintain control of and defend trade routes and resources? It may have and perhaps hired warriors filled this kind of gap as the tribal elite moved away from raiding into trading. This could have also created the economic

motivations and the environment where British and Gallic warriors moved across the Channel for coin.

The Catuvellauni under Cunobelin sought to extend their dominance through trade, others held to the more warlike practices of old. The spread of Catuvellauni coinage attributed to Cunobelin may suggest that he used money as a persuasive factor in gaining trade deals alongside military power.

Classical scholars noted the existence of mercenaries in Iron Age society and 'Celtic' warriors are recorded as fighting for the Greek states, Macedonia and Hannibal and the movement of mercenaries may have been a 'mechanism for peacefully removing surplus young men from within a group'.<sup>98</sup> The movement of mercenary bands could increase to whole tribal groups.<sup>99</sup>

The semi-professional nature of the tribal elite war band may have made the transition to hired mercenaries an easy step to take. This could help explain the presence of British warriors fighting Caesar in Gaul and the existence of Gallo-Belgic C, D and E coin types in southeastern Britain from the first century BC. Caesar, in stating the presence of Britons in Gaul, may have been recording a tradition of mercenary movements across the Channel.<sup>100</sup>

The bulk of the tribe was made up from the free members of their tribal groups and was responsible for filling the ranks of the tribal armies and working the land. These people, through the absence of rich material evidence in their graves, have left proof of their existence. The warrior and merchant elite of Britain left grave goods showing off their wealth; the absence of rich grave goods suggests common folk.<sup>101</sup>

Free people worked the land in return for stock from the tribal elite. They paid the ruling families in food-rent and by offering services.<sup>102</sup> Service on campaign and the working on defences may also have been expected in return for seed,

stock and protection. Small hamlets possibly constituting free family units and the extent of land use in Britain supports this arrangement.<sup>103</sup> A flourishing agricultural economy supported the large population seen in Britain.<sup>104</sup>

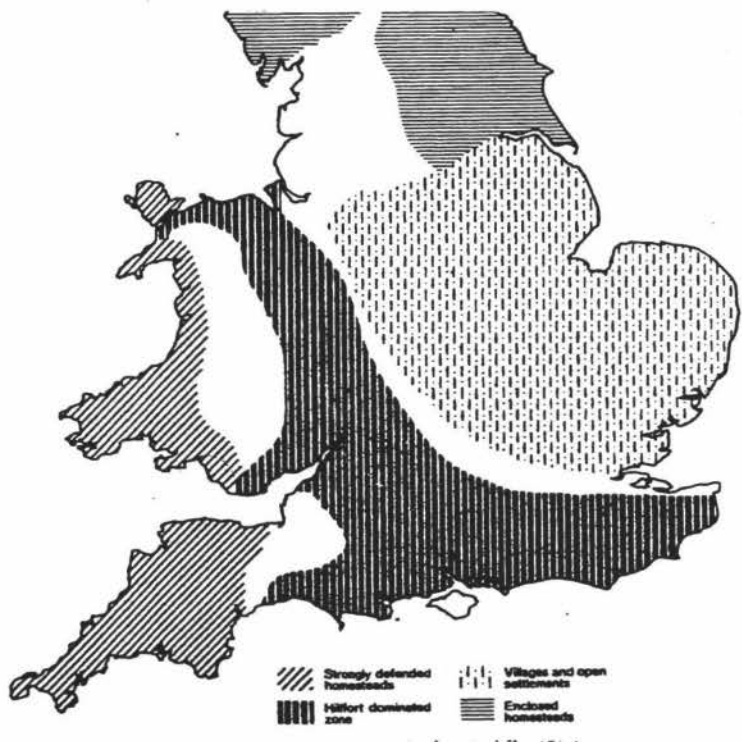
Living alongside the free people within the tribal units were the non-free members of the tribe. The term non-free is used to describe the level of British society where the people may have been denied political freedom because of law breaking or other reasons such as warfare and raiding.<sup>105</sup>

When Caesar moved into Gaul from 58BC, hundreds of thousands of Gallic people resistant to Rome were sold into slavery. Britain, to the Romans, may have been seen as another location to obtain more slaves through conquest and from slave trading networks.<sup>106</sup> It is also possible that contact with the Roman world encouraged trade in a new commodity of human slaves. Strabo however, wrote that Britain traded in captive manpower.<sup>107</sup>

A slave trade that developed in Britain may have risen with the westward expansion of Roman frontier and could indeed have been a response to supply and demand on the continent. Slaves would have been moved through British tribal lands as a trade commodity, not remaining as a part of a slave culture within Iron Age society.<sup>108</sup> Slave chains found at the hill fort of Bigbury in Kent and Llyn Cerrig Bach in Wales supports the classical accounts of a slave trade in Britain, but at what level British society relied on slaves is unclear.<sup>109</sup>

From a military viewpoint, slaves would pose a security problem when a tribe went campaigning or raiding. Any society that has an element of slavery would need to ensure that any un-free population would not rise at any time of crisis. There is no evidence in the classical sources of slave uprisings in Iron Age Britain.

Archaeology and aerial photography has uncovered evidence of Iron Age dwellings across Britain. The hill-fort is one of the better-known and physically obvious remains of Bronze and Iron Age habitation. British tribes used hill-forts and these structures signify a combination of military response, display of wealth and the need for protection on a large and organized scale. Hill-forts were occupied and abandoned at regular intervals.



Map 3. General settlement types in Britain around 150BC.  
(From M.Millett. *The Romanization of Britain: An Essay in Archaeological Interpretation*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1990 p 16).

Some hill-forts sustained large populations such as Danesbury (two hundred<sup>110</sup>), Maiden Castle and Hod Hill (four hundred to one thousand<sup>111</sup>). They contained roundhouses, storage buildings and pits with agricultural and industry-based buildings. Danesbury, Maiden Castle and Hod Hill even had primitive street systems.<sup>112</sup> The population of such hill-forts varied and these settlement uses were widespread.

Wacher gives a figure of hill-forts in Britain (including northern England and Scotland) as over 3,000 sites known to have been occupied at one stage or another.<sup>113</sup> The military aspect of hill-forts was seen in the reaction of the Durotrigian who responded to the Roman invasions in 55-54BC and 43AD by refortifying and defending their hill forts.

The British countryside that had been cleared was well populated and aerial photography shows obvious housing patterns based around farming settlements. British housing was largely round in structure with cone shaped roofing and generally made of wood, although dry-stone buildings existed in parts of Wales. Reconstructed houses can be found at Buster farm in Hampshire;<sup>114</sup> while many dry stone remains can be found at sites in Cornwall (Crane Godrevy, Goldherring and Porthmeor) and Wales (Hafoty Wern-Las, Din Lligwy and Cefn Graeanog III).<sup>115</sup>

Excavations at hill forts such as Danebury, Croft Ambrey and Credenhill Camp show evidence of rectangular housing. It is unclear to whether these buildings were occupied or functioned as storage sheds or workshops.<sup>116</sup>

Ditches, stone enclosures, palisades or hedges were utilised to defend some settlements and the number of buildings varied with the size of the settlements.<sup>117</sup> British housing was also free of window glass or roofing tiles, with the use of thatch, turf, hide or wooden shingles preferred. The floor was of earth or sometimes-wooden planks.<sup>118</sup>



Towns in a classical sense were largely absent in Britain and hill forts, rural settlements and farmsteads centred on field systems were regularly spread throughout the countryside.<sup>119</sup> Some tribal areas were moving into large settlement structures known as *oppida*. These were a large area defended by a series of embankments or dykes. These were 'urban or proto-urban settlements' and several have been located at Camulodunum, Verulamium, Canterbury, Calleva, Venta, Bagendon and Chichester.<sup>120</sup>

The *oppida* was a settlement structure also developing in Gaul from the second century BC and was the Roman term used to describe large settlements that functioned as tribal administrative centres that housed craftsmen and coinage mints.<sup>121</sup> The British *oppida* varied in size, with Camulodunum incorporating an area of 31km Square, Venta 13.8 hectares and Bagendon 81 hectares.<sup>122</sup>

The larger tribes within the core zones were developing this style of settlement by the first century BC. The Durotriges style of proto-urban settlement saw the further increase in populations living within established hill forts. This may reflect the need for protection from internal and external pressures.

Agriculture was one of the main activities in Iron Age Britain and aerial photography and archaeological evidence show that field systems averaged between 0.1 and 0.2ha in area, basically the area a person could plough in a day. British sites number in the thousands.<sup>123</sup> Agricultural production, as discussed above was so intensive in southeast Britain at least (due to Iron Age technology) that by the first centuries BC and AD communities were able to yield a substantial surplus of food crops. This stimulated population growth and created an environment that could sustain tribal elite and specialized craftsmen.<sup>124</sup>



The security of agricultural production had military implications for a tribe's ability to put warriors into the field and finance them. Tribal raiding would have minimal impact on a tribe's food supply especially if surpluses were held within hill forts or defended enclosures. The presence of a Roman army and their search for food, however would have been taxing on a tribe's food resources.

It was also vitally important that crops could be kept from invading forces, denying them subsistence in hostile lands. Caesar faced this problem in 54BC and had to rely on pro-Roman tribes (the Trinovantes) for supplies.

Archaeological excavations at the settlement of Hengistbury provide an example of an Iron Age location of grain collection, suggesting that the population there was removed from primary agricultural production.<sup>125</sup> By the late Iron Age, British agriculture was 'sophisticated and highly productive', supporting the practice of grain exportation out of Britain.<sup>126</sup>

Crop production yielded a wide variety of cereals, which included emmer wheat, naked barley, rye, oats and beans. Britain also had plants, fruit and nuts. Some varieties grown in Britain included carrots, cabbages, hazelnuts and spices.<sup>127</sup>

The woodlands of Britain were used to graze animals, of which pigs were of importance. Domesticated birds, in the form of chickens, geese and ducks, were exploited as food sources as well as seafood. Sheep and cattle grazing varied in intensity, with sheep being utilised more prior to the Roman invasion, although both were maintained with regional variations in native settlements after 43AD.<sup>128</sup>

An important change in the pursuit of wealth and prestige came in the form of trade. After 54BC, Britain was directly drawn into the sphere of the classical money economy that had moved into Gaul as early as 600BC. Massilia had provided a base for trade goods to flow into and out of

Bronze and Iron Age Gaul and Britain. The standard movement between Gaul and Britain and the classical world was essentially that of European raw materials for Greek and Roman luxury products.

Trade has military implications and will be looked at in depth below, suffice to say here that trade rose to a level where tribes in Gaul and Britain shared control of and competed for the dominance of the Channel and a complex trade network developed and continued into the first century AD. After 54BC, the Catuvellauni and Atrebates in Britain built up powerful states based on trade and competed against each other for the domination of southeastern Britain.

The ability to grow a surplus enabled trade exports. This in turn stimulated a move towards centralised power bases that increased the wealth of the ruling elite and their ability to compete with other trade rivals. Trade links to the continent would have also bought the possibility of trade and diplomatic deals with the Romans, as seen in the Atrebates and possibly the Iceni and Cunobelin.

Evidence of trading dominance can be traced through coinage that had found its way first into Gaul, bought by mercenaries serving in the Hellenic armies and thus transported to and adopted by British tribes.<sup>129</sup> The money economy took over once Rome conquered Britain, yet the barter system, an important facet of Iron Age trading tradition, remained an integral part of native economics.

Land was an important factor in economics and society. Land provided tribal sustenance as well as the natural resources that were vital for trade. But who “owned” the land? The system of land ownership in the Iron Age has been described as an embedded economy.<sup>130</sup> The issue of ownership may have held little importance as the land was communally shared. The tribal elite however, controlled the all-important produce from the land and thus any surplus

enabling them to establish strong trading power. Grazing rights and plot allotment were allocated to individuals or small family groups.<sup>131</sup>

Raiding was another way in which warriors gained wealth prior to the rise in importance of trade orientated economics. Cunliffe believes that movement away from the use of hill forts between the first centuries BC and AD was a reaction to the shift from a raiding economy to trade. Trade and the protection of trade route and agreements may have made raiding between trading tribes obsolete.<sup>132</sup> However the potential wealth to be gained from raiding trade routes must have appealed to those tribal groups outside of the trading networks.

Classical sources point to an underlying factor in the culture and activities of Iron Age Britons, their apparent celebration of warfare and martial activities. The pursuit of wealth and prestige could be achieved through war or trade.

Archaeology supports classical accounts in describing the equipment used by Iron Age warriors of Britain. What they looked like and the weapons they used in turn gives an insight into how they fought. Archaeological finds from Iron Age Britain show the range of weaponry, such as helmets, swords, spears and shields that were used. It also shows that the Iron Age Britons put much energy into the making and use of arms.

The Iron Age armies of Britain were essentially infantry-based and Tacitus states that (alongside the chariot) this was one of their martial strengths.<sup>133</sup> The tribal freemen would have made up the mass of infantry. The equipment they used varied from projectile weapons, such as bow and arrows, slings and throwing spears or javelins and shields. It is highly probable that the primary weapon of the infantry was the spear or throwing javelin.<sup>134</sup>

Caesar wrote of the problems and uncertainty his men experienced on reaching the shores of Britain during his raid in 55BC, because of the hail of projectiles the tribal warriors hurled into the waiting soldiers.<sup>135</sup> The use of projectile weapons was stated in this instance and on other occasions where close quarters fighting began after a volley of spears and javelins had been thrown into the enemy's ranks.

Archaeological finds have produced many examples of spearheads in gravesites and in votive deposits sites along the Thames. Coinage and stone reliefs depicting spearmen support the wide usage of the spear by British warriors. The spear and throwing javelin also suited the British tribal style of raiding or indirect warfare where the projectile would complement hit and run tactics. This style of warfare featured largely in the response to Roman invasion under the direction of Cassivellaunus in 54BC.

The tribal levies either fought without armour or wore light body protection. This armour consisted of jerkins of hardened and greased leather with shoulder straps protecting vital areas while some warriors preferred fighting semi-naked, trusting to magic to protect them in battle.<sup>136</sup> The cost of armour and helmets would also have restricted their use to the tribal elite so therefore the tribal levies were generally light troops.

Warriors of the tribal elite wore armour, which because of its cost would have possibly increased the wearer's status and profile on the battlefield while also giving protection. Evidence of chain mail has been represented in bronze and stone statues, while archaeological finds support its use.<sup>137</sup> An example of well-preserved British chain mail was found at St Albans (Pre-Roman Verulamium).<sup>138</sup>

It has been claimed that chain mail was in fact a Celtic invention, dating to graves in 300BC. Chain mail, due to its labour intensive manufacture, may not only have been a

status symbol but a family heirloom as well.<sup>139</sup> The limited amount of armour worn by the tribal armies of Iron Age Britain had a great impact on casualties when they met well-armoured Roman soldiers and auxiliaries at close quarters. The indirect style of warfare may have reflected an understanding of what would happen when lightly clad warriors faced the Romans in pitched battle.

Iron Age warriors carried large shields for attack and protection in battle. Diodorus describes shields decorated in individual designs that fall into line with the fashionable mentality of British Iron Age Warriors.<sup>140</sup> Shields were an important part of an Iron Age warrior's equipment and many stone reliefs and statues show these shields.

Shields were made out of a variety of material from wood and leather to bronze. Some of the fine bronze examples like the Battersea and Chertsey shields, which were recovered from rivers, suggest votive or ceremonial functions as opposed to more practical combat usage. Their cosmetic features and the absence of any signs of combat support this assumption.

The size of the shields Iron Age Britons carried may also reflect a technical development in weaponry seen across Western Europe. They varied in size, ranging from 1.1m to 1.3-1.4m.<sup>141</sup> These shields could possibly have evolved out of a need to cover the body from projectile attack. These long shields are traced to the Hallstatt period and continued into the La Tène period.<sup>142</sup>

The Bronze and Iron Age swords of the Britons are well documented and hundreds have been found throughout Britain. There is evidence supporting the high quality of Iron Age swords and also accounts of weapons of poor quality. Polybius, when writing about Gallic warriors and their swords, wrote that after the first sword blows 'the edges are immediately blunted and the blades become so bent

lengthways and sideways that unless the men are given time to straighten them against the ground, the second blow has virtually no effect.' Scott-Kilvert believes Polybius started this 'legend' and was then copied by Plutarch who recounted Gallic swords used in 377BC.<sup>143</sup>

The softness of the swords Polybius described indicates that they may have been made of bronze or soft iron. Cunliffe states that Polybius' observations of sword quality and shape may have been the result of ritual activity as opposed to combat.<sup>144</sup>

An Iron Age sword found in Kirkburn, East Yorkshire, however shows an amazing example of British craftsmanship. The remains of this sword (constituting over seventy components) provide insight of a considerable technical skill in its design, with its intricate pommel, grip and hand guard assembly. The scabbard, hand guard and pommel are engraved and have detailed enamelling.<sup>145</sup>

The inconsistencies between classical accounts and archaeological evidence suggests that across Gaul and Britain, sword manufacture was as varied as the people who occupied these lands and that their skills, and the quality of the iron used, was quite possibly just as varied. Perhaps the need to arm large armies quickly affected the quality of swords in Iron Age Europe?

Accepting that the primary weapons of the tribal armies were the spear and shield points to the strong possibility that high quality sword, like chain mail, was an item used by the tribal elite and represented a symbol of status. In 47-48AD the Iceni rose in revolt against the Roman governor of Britain, Publius Ostorius Scapula when he sought to disarm their nobles.<sup>146</sup> An attack on their right to wear the sword as a badge of status may have incensed the Iceni.

The very shape, nature and rich decorations of the British Iron Age sword, with its length (an average of up to 90cm<sup>147</sup>)

and slashing function, could point to the sword being more an item of show or intimidation and that the actual business end of combat was covered by the widely used spears and javelins.

As stated above the javelin is shown on many depictions of British mounted or chariot-riding warriors. Coinage from Tincommius, Verica and Epaticcus has been found depicting mounted spearmen.<sup>148</sup> The Roman monumental arch at Orange from the first century AD, and within the period under discussion, shows Iron Age weaponry captured and includes among the shields, swords, helmets and war-horns, a large number of spears.<sup>149</sup>

The chariot and cavalry made up parts of the tribal armies of Britain and would have been the domain of the tribal elite. Chariot warfare, mentioned by several classical writers, had faded from the tactics of Iron Age armies in Gaul well before 58BC but was still in use across the Channel. Horses, the means to pull the chariots were well established in Britain for riding and draught by one thousand BC.<sup>150</sup>

The single-axled, two horse chariot was used as a launching pad from which warriors, supported by a driver, could release javelins into the ranks of the enemy. An accepted view in Iron Age Britain is of the tribal warrior charging into the ranks of the enemy's infantry, dismounting to engage in hand to hand combat, while their driver departed the battlefield to return when required, effectively functioning as what's been termed a 'battle taxi'.<sup>151</sup> Caesar wrote that the chariot-riding warrior combined the mobility of cavalry, shock of projectile and the impact and stamina of flexible infantry.<sup>152</sup>

The notion of a 'battle taxi', while providing a romantic function for the chariot, seems quite impractical. Single chariots moving within the ranks of formed up Roman formations would have no advantage at all. If these Romans



were in disorder then the impact of the chariot, closely supported by cavalry could be effective indeed. The chariot would have however, made a good platform to throw spears and javelins from.

In Britain, Caesar mentions cavalry and chariots working along side.<sup>153</sup> British cavalry would have provided tribal armies with their mobility for screening, reconnaissance and as an impact force. Gallic and British tribesmen were well respected as mounted troops and Gallic cavalry enjoyed service in the Roman army during the invasions of 54BC and 43AD.

Warfare had a religious element in the tribal warrior societies of Iron Age Britain. As already stated, Druids have been recorded as being present on the battlefield where they were employed to act as spell casters, while also working to unnerve the opposing armies. Many accounts also discuss the practice of offering weapons up before and after battle. This suggests a spiritual/religious dimension to Iron Age warfare in Britain.

On the island of Mona, the site of Llyn Cerrig Bach has given up one hundred and thirty eight archaeological items.<sup>154</sup> Most are of a martial nature suggesting that this was a place of importance to warriors who deposited an array of weapons as votive offerings.<sup>155</sup> The Thames has also given up weapons that appear to have been votive offerings, the most famous finds being the Battersea shield and the Waterloo Bridge horned helmet.

The use of blue body paint or woad (extracts from *Isalis tinctoria*), and the reports of naked warriors as discussed above, also suggests a religious element to Iron Age warfare. A body found in Lindow Moss in the early eighties had signs of body paint, supporting the reports of painted Britons.<sup>156</sup> There are no practical reasons for going into battle naked and indeed would appear strange unless there was some sense of



protection, possibly through spells or magical properties in body paint or a belief that, through votive offering one had the gods' protection.

Caesar wrote that the Iron Age people he came into contact with in his wars believed in a form of reincarnation and that the soul 'does not perish but passes after death from one body to another'.<sup>157</sup> This belief may have influenced the way warriors fought, with their belief that entry into the afterlife was automatic, not determined by deeds done while living. These Iron Age warriors may have had an attitude to death comparable to the Scandinavian concept of Valhalla.<sup>158</sup> Weapons and other items of everyday life found with burial remains suggest a belief in the afterlife by Iron Age Britons.<sup>159</sup>

These tribal people were polytheistic and worshipped many gods and goddesses. Some of the deities worshipped in relation to warfare were the horned gods Cernunnos and the Catuvellaunian Camulos, who gave his name to the oppida of Camulodunum.<sup>160</sup> The Iceni worshiped Andrasta, the goddess of victory.<sup>161</sup> Dio gives an account of the Iceni under Boudicca committing atrocities as a way of appeasing the goddess Andate (Andrasta).<sup>162</sup> Boudicca may have seen herself as an agent for her goddess. Each tribe would have worshipped local deities who may have also represented more peaceful aspects of Iron Age life, along with the more warlike past times.<sup>163</sup>

The people of Britain occupied the western corner of the Western European Iron Age and evolved culturally alongside those on the continent, however with distinct variations. The geographical, ethnic, political, economic, religious and martial features of the Iron Age Britons shaped the way they responded to the Roman invasions. These began with

Caesar's tentative raids in 55 and 54BC culminating in the full-scale invasion of 43AD.

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Reference Notes, Chapter One.

<sup>1</sup> Julius Caesar. *The Battle for Gaul*. Translated by A & P, Wiseman. London, Chatto and Windus. 1980, pp. 92-93.

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, the western European Bronze and Iron Age will be referred to simply as the Iron or Bronze Age.

<sup>3</sup> S. James. *Exploring the World of the Celts*. London, Thames and Hudson Ltd. 1993, p. 48.

<sup>4</sup> Both Hallstatt and La Tène are named after archaeological sites in Europe.

<sup>5</sup> James. 1993, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> P. B. Ellis. *The Celtic Empire: The First Millennium of Celtic History 1000BC-51AD*. London, Constable and Company Ltd. 1990, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> E.M. Wightman. *Gallia Belgica*. London, Batsford Ltd. 1985, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> A. Ross and D. Robins. *The Life and Death of a Druid Prince: The Story of an Archaeological Sensation*. London, Rider. 1989, pp. 56 & 144.

<sup>9</sup> James. 1993, p. 110.

<sup>10</sup> D. MacAuley. *The Celtic Language*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1992, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> James. 1993, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> P Russell. *An Introduction to the Celtic Languages*. Essex, Longman Group Limited. 1995, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> G. Webster. *Boudicca: The British Revolt Against Rome AD60*. London, B.T. Batsford Ltd. 1978, pp. 29-30.

<sup>14</sup> Peddie. 1997, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Webster. 1978, pp. 30-31.

<sup>16</sup> J. Creighton. *Coins and Power in Late Iron Age Britain*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 2000, p. 18. James. 1999, p. 40.

<sup>17</sup> James. 1999, p. 97.

<sup>18</sup> B. Cunliffe. *Iron Age Communities in Britain*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. 1975, p. 89.

<sup>19</sup> Caesar. Book IV, 2.

<sup>20</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 112.

<sup>21</sup> James. 1999, p. 103.

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- <sup>22</sup> G. Webster. 'Fort and Town in Early Roman Britain: The Relationship of Civil and Military Sites in the Conquest and Early Settlement Phase of Roman Britain.' In J.S. Wachter (Ed) *The Civitas Capitals of Roman Britain*. Leicester, Leicester University Press. 1966, p. 31. James also lists the tribal grouping of the Belgae as a post-conquest creation. 1999, p. 103.
- <sup>23</sup> Caesar. Book I, 1.
- <sup>24</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 97.
- <sup>25</sup> *ibid.* pp. 60-62.
- <sup>26</sup> Webster. 1978, pp. 46-47.
- <sup>27</sup> S. Frere. *Britannia: A History of Roman Britain*. (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition) London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. 1987, p. 35.
- <sup>28</sup> G. Webster. *Rome Against Caratacus*. London, B.T. Batsford Ltd. 1981, p. 14. Branigan. 1985, p. 2.
- <sup>29</sup> Wiseman and Wiseman. 1980, p. 92. Cunliffe also states that the Catuvellauni were of non-Belgic origin. Personal communication, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003.
- <sup>30</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, pp. 60&62. Frere. 1987, p. 11.
- <sup>31</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 33.
- <sup>32</sup> J. Wachter. *A Portrait of Roman Britain*. London, Routledge. 2000, p. 16.
- <sup>33</sup> B. Jones & D. Mattingly. *An Atlas of Roman Britain*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell Ltd. 1990, p. 4.
- <sup>34</sup> *ibid.* p. 4.
- <sup>35</sup> Wachter. 2000, p. 7.
- <sup>36</sup> Wachter. 2000, p. 18; A. King. *Exploring the Roman World: Roman Gaul and Germany*. London, British Museum Publications. 1990, p. 105.
- <sup>37</sup> Chapters three and four will look at the tactical benefit of using rivers in a defensive capacity.
- <sup>38</sup> K. Dark & P. Dark. *The Landscape of Roman Britain*. Gloucestershire, Sutton Publishing. 1997, p. 18.
- <sup>39</sup> James. 1993, p. 63.
- <sup>40</sup> In 400BC, a Gallic army made an incursion into Italy and sacked Rome in 390.
- <sup>41</sup> Wiseman & P. Wiseman. 1980, p. 11.
- <sup>42</sup> *ibid.* p. 12.
- <sup>43</sup> James. 1993, p. 118.
- <sup>44</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 308.
- <sup>45</sup> James describes large tribal power-blocs at the time of Caesar, such as the Aedui and the Arverni. See James. 1993, p. 46.

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- <sup>46</sup> K.Branigan. *The Catuvellauni*. Gloucester, Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd. 1985, pp. 6-7.
- <sup>47</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1.
- <sup>48</sup> C. Haselgrove 'The Later Iron Age in Southern Britain and Beyond' in *Research on Roman Britain 1960-89*. London, The Society For the Promotion of Roman Studies. 1989 p 16.
- <sup>49</sup> B. Cunliffe. *Wessex to AD 1000*. London, Longman Group. 1993, p. 211.
- <sup>50</sup> Cunliffe. 1988, p. 157.
- <sup>51</sup> *ibid.* p. 157.
- <sup>52</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 107.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* Cunliffe claims that the Gangani of Northern Wales had cultural links to the tribe of the same name in Ireland.
- <sup>54</sup> Northern Wales appears to have had a long tradition of trade with Ireland enabling the importation of items from Ireland, other parts of Britain and Northern Europe. See Cunliffe. 1975, p. 51.
- <sup>55</sup> P. Chérici. *Celtic Sexuality: Power, Paradigms and Passion*. London, Gerald Duckworth and Co Ltd. 1995, p. 132.
- <sup>56</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1. L. Laing & J.Laing. *Celtic Britain and Ireland: Art and Society*. London, BCA and The Herbert Press Ltd. 1995, p. 18.
- <sup>57</sup> James. 1993, p. 7.
- <sup>58</sup> Creighton. p. 4.
- <sup>59</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 227. James provides Danebury as an example that may have required an 'organizing hand' in its construction. See James. 1993, p. 62.
- <sup>60</sup> Creighton. p. 9.
- <sup>61</sup> Dark & Dark. p. 12.
- <sup>62</sup> The territories of Cunobelin were divided between his three sons Togodumnus, Caratacus and Adminius and his Brother Eborac. See Branigan. p. 30.
- <sup>63</sup> Caesar. Book VI, 2.
- <sup>64</sup> James. 1993, p. 120.
- <sup>65</sup> Wightman. P. 24.
- <sup>66</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 70.
- <sup>67</sup> Caesar. Book IV, 2.
- <sup>68</sup> A.L.F. Rivet. 'Summing Up: Some Historical Aspects of the Civitates of Roman Britain.' In J. S. Wacher (Ed) *The Civitas Capitals of Roman Britain*. Leicester, Leicester University Press. 1966, p. 102.

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- <sup>69</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 122.
- <sup>70</sup> Cherici. p. 131.
- <sup>71</sup> *ibid.* p. 131.
- <sup>72</sup> *ibid.* p. 132.
- <sup>73</sup> Cherici. p. 131. Ellis. 1990, p. 16.
- <sup>74</sup> Ellis. 1990, p. 16.
- <sup>75</sup> Caesar. Book VI, 2.
- <sup>76</sup> P. B. Ellis. *Caesar's Invasion of Britain*. London, Orbis Publishing Limited 1978, p. 43.
- <sup>77</sup> James. 1993, p. 64.
- <sup>78</sup> *ibid.* p. 64. Diodorus of Sicily. Book V, 30.
- <sup>79</sup> Ellis. 1990, p. 144.
- <sup>80</sup> Diodorus of Sicily. Book V, 30. James. 1993, p. 66. A fifth century body was found in a bog Denmark wearing tartan, evidence that this fabric has been around for a long time.
- <sup>81</sup> P. B. Ellis. *Celtic Women: Women in Celtic Society and Literature*. London, Constable and Company. 1995, p. 104.
- <sup>82</sup> *ibid.* p. 107.
- <sup>83</sup> Caesar. Book VI, 2.
- <sup>84</sup> Ellis. 1995, p. 77.
- <sup>85</sup> Boudicca will be discussed in depth in chapter six.
- <sup>86</sup> Cherici. p. 18.
- <sup>87</sup> Ellis. 1995, p. 141.
- <sup>88</sup> *ibid.* p. 115.
- <sup>89</sup> James. 1993, p. 53.
- <sup>90</sup> W. Rutherford. *Celtic Lore: The History of the Druids and their Timeless Traditions*. London, The Aquarian Press. 1993, p. 26.
- <sup>91</sup> Caesar. Book VI, 2.
- <sup>92</sup> James. 1993, p. 90.
- <sup>93</sup> Ross & Robins. pp. 145-146.
- <sup>94</sup> Tacitus. *The Annals*. XIV, 30.
- <sup>95</sup> Ross & Robins. p. 50.

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- <sup>96</sup> Caesar. Book VI, 2.
- <sup>97</sup> Laing & Laing. 1995, p. 41.
- <sup>98</sup> James. 1993, pp. 80-81.
- <sup>99</sup> Wightman. p. 22.
- <sup>100</sup> Caesar. Book IV, 2.
- <sup>101</sup> The Arras culture cemeteries provide detailed examples of Iron Age burials. See James. 1993, pp. 100-102.
- <sup>102</sup> Laing & Laing. 1995, p. 19.
- <sup>103</sup> Wightman. p. 23.
- <sup>104</sup> Dark & Dark. p. 14.
- <sup>105</sup> Ellis. 1995, p. 119 & Ellis. 1978, pp. 27-28.
- <sup>106</sup> Cunliffe. 1988, p. 161.
- <sup>107</sup> Cunliffe. 1993, p. 203.
- <sup>108</sup> Cunliffe. 1988, p. 156.
- <sup>109</sup> Jones & Mattingly. p. 57. Laing & Laing. 1995, p. 26.
- <sup>110</sup> James. 1993. p. 62.
- <sup>111</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, pp. 254 & 259-260.
- <sup>112</sup> *ibid*, p. 98. Wachter. 2000, p. 25.
- <sup>113</sup> Wachter. 2000, p. 25.
- <sup>114</sup> James. 1993, pp. 55-57.
- <sup>115</sup> Dark & Dark. pp. 83 & 87.
- <sup>116</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, pp. 256-259.
- <sup>117</sup> Wachter. 2000, pp. 23-24.
- <sup>118</sup> Dark & Dark. p. 13.
- <sup>119</sup> Dark & Dark. p. 13 & Wightman. p. 16.
- <sup>120</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, pp. 80, 92-95 & 102.
- <sup>121</sup> James. 1993, p. 119.
- <sup>122</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, pp. 84, 94 & 102.
- <sup>123</sup> Wachter. 2000, pp. 26-27.
- <sup>124</sup> Haselgrove. 1989, p. 8.

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- <sup>125</sup> *ibid.* p. 7.
- <sup>126</sup> I. Hodder & M. Millet. 'The Human Geography of Roman Britain' In Roberts. *An Historical Geography of England and Wales*. London, Academic Press. 1990, p. 37.
- <sup>127</sup> King. p. 100.
- <sup>128</sup> King. pp. 101-105; Dark & Dark. p. 112.
- <sup>129</sup> Cunliffe. 1997, pp. 130-131.
- <sup>130</sup> James. 1993, p. 70.
- <sup>131</sup> *ibid.* p. 70.
- <sup>132</sup> Cunliffe. 1993, p. 221.
- <sup>133</sup> Tacitus. *Tacitus on Britain and Germany*. Translated by H. Mattingly. Middlesex, Penguin Books Ltd. 1948, p. 62.
- <sup>134</sup> James. 1993, p. 75.
- <sup>135</sup> Caesar. Book IV, 2.
- <sup>136</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 28. James. 1993, p. 77.
- <sup>137</sup> Ellis. 1978, p. 45 & James. 1993, p. 125 & Cunliffe. 1997, p. 7.
- <sup>138</sup> Laing & Laing. 1995, p. 35.
- <sup>139</sup> James. 1993, p. 77.
- <sup>140</sup> Diodorus of Sicily. Book V, 30. Cunliffe. 1997, p. 96.
- <sup>141</sup> James. 1993, p. 75.
- <sup>142</sup> P. Wilcox. *Rome's Enemies 2: Gallic and British Celts*. London, Osprey. 1985, p. 18.
- <sup>143</sup> Polybius. *The Rise of the Roman Empire*. Middlesex, Penguin Books Ltd. 1979, p. 143.
- <sup>144</sup> Cunliffe. 1997, p. 94.
- <sup>145</sup> James. 1993, p. 112.
- <sup>146</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 59.
- <sup>147</sup> Wilcox. p. 21.
- <sup>148</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, plate number 28.
- <sup>149</sup> Cunliffe. 1997, p. 96.
- <sup>150</sup> Davis. p. 24.
- <sup>151</sup> James. 1993, p. 78.
- <sup>152</sup> Caesar. Book IV, 2.

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<sup>153</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> Ross & Robin. p. 121.

<sup>155</sup> Webster. p. 83.

<sup>156</sup> D.Clarke and A.Roberts. *Twilight of the Celtic Gods: An Exploration of Britain's Hidden Pagan Traditions*. London, Blandfords. 1996, p. 34.

<sup>157</sup> Caesar. Book VI, 2.

<sup>158</sup> James. 1993, p. 89.

<sup>159</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 298.

<sup>160</sup> *ibid.* p. 299.

<sup>161</sup> James. 1993, p. 89.

<sup>162</sup> C. Dio. *Dio's Roman History volume VIII*. London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1961 Book LXII, 7 p. 95.

<sup>163</sup> B. Cunliffe. *The Celtic World*. Maidenhead, McGraw-Hill Book Company. 1979, p. 74.



## CHAPTER II

### THE BRITISH TRIBAL RESPONSE TO ROMAN INVASION.

*'Indeed, nothing has helped us more in war with their strongest nations than their inability to co-operate. It is seldom that two or three states unite to repel a common danger; fighting in detail they are conquered wholesale.'*

Tacitus.<sup>1</sup>

The political framework of Iron Age Britain was divided into tribal groups that experienced a fluid exchange of political, military and trade alliances within Britain and across the Channel. The state of flux existing in southeast Britain leading up to Caesar's raids and the invasion of Claudius created problems in assembling and maintaining a united front by British tribes in the face of Roman invasion. This chapter will consider whether tribal loyalties would have taken precedence over joining pan-British opposition to invasion, while discussing how Iron Age Britons reacted to Caesar's military raids in 55 and 54BC and then the full-scale Roman invasion in 43AD. This will be done on a tribe-by-tribe basis highlighting military reactions and the reasons for differing responses to Roman invasion.

In 55BC Caesar turned his eyes to the British Isles, thus bringing Britain into direct contact with the expanding Roman world. Three years earlier he had moved into Gaul defeating those who opposed him. Some had resisted while others sensed the changing face of Gallic politics and joined the Romans.

The Gallic political environment, as discussed, was one of shifting alliances prompted by the jostling for power and the control of the movement of trade goods into and out of Gaul.

Caesar's moves into Gaul shook the power balance and Rome's indirect intrigue in Gaul developed into raw military invasion. Caesar found that the British tribal military responses to his moves across the Channel in 55BC were equally as varied.

In almost all his campaigning in Gaul, Caesar had noticed Britons fighting within the Gallic armies.<sup>2</sup> It is unclear how Caesar distinguished British warriors from Gallic ones although the practice of painting the body blue and shield shaped oval with concave ends were unique to Britain and may have made them easily identified in Gallic armies.<sup>3</sup> Their presence as a military supporting the Gauls was one reason Caesar gave for a military expedition against the Britons. Another came from his political manoeuvring and a desire to enhance his reputation and image back in Rome. Conquest was also a way for Caesar to gain war loot and pay off his debts incurred in Rome.<sup>4</sup>

For the Romans, the Channel represented the end of the known world and some soldiers believed they were possibly sailing off the edge of their known world.<sup>5</sup> A reluctance to cross the Channel would also plague the Roman commander, Aulus Plautius, in 43AD despite Caesar's well documented raids in 55 and 54BC. After diplomatic envoys from Britain had failed to convince Caesar otherwise, he crossed the Channel.<sup>6</sup>

On the night of the 25<sup>th</sup> August 55BC, Caesar crossed the Channel from Boulogne in Gaul with two legions, the VIIth and the Xth totalling ten thousand legionaries with possibly an equal number of auxiliary troops (making the total approximately twenty thousand soldiers).<sup>7</sup> A contingent of cavalry also set sail but failed to make the crossing successfully so without its cavalry wing, the Roman fleet reached the white cliffs of Dover where they found a British tribal army waiting.<sup>8</sup>

The force that lined the Dover cliffs-tops were the tribal warriors of the Cantiaci, who have left their name to the area of modern day Kent and Canterbury.<sup>9</sup> Four chieftains, Cingetorix, Carnilius, Taximagulus and Segonax, led the Cantiaci.<sup>10</sup> They were joined by warriors from the west, the Atrebate, who aided them in their defence of the coast. These four Cantiaci war leaders are later mentioned working with Cassivellaunus in 54BC.<sup>11</sup> The Cantiaci were the most eastern tribe and would bear the full force of any Roman push into southeast Britain. Why did the Cantiaci oppose Caesar in 55 and 54BC?

The tribal origin of the Cantiaci was of Belgic stock and Caesar observed their similarity to those tribes directly across the Channel in Gaul. Their geographical proximity to north eastern Gaul also points strongly to shared trade links and cultural, political and kin-ties to the continent.<sup>12</sup> These close trade or kin ties (and the presence of Gallic refugees fleeing Caesars advance) may have created a natural opposition to Rome that came from an understanding of what was in store for them under Roman rule, having watched events in Gaul unfold.

Caesar's incursion into Britain in 55BC can be seen as a reconnaissance in force. He certainly implied as much writing that 'it would be well worth while merely to have visited the island' where he could get a measure of the people while also gaining 'knowledge of the country, its harbours and facilities for landing'.<sup>13</sup> These words could possibly have been written to gloss over a situation that may have ended Caesar career. His failure to acquire adequate intelligence left Caesar's force with a poor chance of success. Any force, regardless of size, reduces the chance of success without good intelligence.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps Caesar's success in Gaul made him confident enough to cross the Channel and attempt the subjugation of

the British tribes in half a campaigning season. Bad weather and the lack of a strong cavalry force left the Roman general in a very vulnerable position. Faced with an unfavourable landing place the Roman fleet moved up the Kentish coast where they found an appropriate beach and pushed ashore, despite serious opposition from the Cantiaci and the Atrebates.

This opposition came in the form of swarming attacks on isolated Roman units or by attacks from weapons hurled from the flanks.<sup>15</sup> Once the beach was captured the tribal warriors withdrew inland. The beach where Caesar's troops landed remains unproven, but Caesar wrote that the fleet sailed eight miles up the Kentish coast from Dover.<sup>16</sup> Wachter places the landing at Walmer Beach that marks the northern end of the chalk cliffs.<sup>17</sup>

The harassing tactics by combined chariot and cavalry executed by the tribal warriors on the beach and on the march inland worked against Caesar and would prove successful the following year under the leadership of Cassivellaunus. Caesar, however, moved inland where he claims to have defeated the tribal warriors on two occasions enabling him to establish peace. Caesar then withdrew to the coast, where his fleet had taken a battering and re-crossed the Channel back to Gaul.<sup>18</sup>

The Cantiaci and their Atrebate allies may have gained confidence on seeing the Roman fleet depart for Gaul where the military situation was far from stabilised. Whatever his reasons for invasion (be they political, military, egotistical or all), Caesar managed to recover the situation in Britain and return safely to Gaul. However the mystery of coastal Britain was no more and Caesar would return.

The Atrebates were the only other tribe noted in support of the Cantiaci in 55BC, and this tribe also provided one of the period's colourful characters, Commius or Comm. As

mentioned above, Commius was a chief of the Atrebates of Gaul who had gained the trust of Caesar, and crossed the Channel ahead of the Roman army on a diplomatic mission to gain British tribal support for Rome.<sup>19</sup>

Caesar sent Commius as he claimed some measure of authority over the British Atrebates. Commius' leadership of the British Atrebates is dated from 50BC when he moved to Britain after running foul of Caesar. The issuing of coins credited to Commius show his presence from this date with coinage attributed to the Atrebates beginning twenty years prior to his arrival.<sup>20</sup>

Commius was an important negotiator in 55 and 54BC and seems to have been deeply involved in the events that unfolded during Caesar's raids. It is not so clear exactly where his loyalties lay and Commius may well have been hedging his bets to see how things would unfold. The evidence left in Caesar's words and the coins attributed to him suggest that his prestige and power suffered nothing after his return to Gaul with Caesar in 54 and his relocation to Britain in 50BC.

Commius arrived in Britain and was allegedly arrested and held by the Cantiaci. There would have been Atrebatian chieftains present in the tribal army and his detention was consistent with the anti-Roman position shown by the British Atrebates.

This incident points to a divergence in the Gallic and British Atrebatian attitudes towards Rome. The British Atrebates stood against Caesar while Commius worked for him, gaining Caesar's confidence after stating he held sway over the Atrebates on both sides of the Channel.<sup>21</sup> There was a clear difference in attitude towards the Romans in 55BC between the Gallic and British Atrebates. This difference could be explained in the British Atrebates having seen the Gallic tribal members coming under the domination of Rome

and not allowing happen to them. Similar tribal political divergences in attitudes towards the Romans also existed within other tribal groups of southeast Britain and would influence tribal response in 43AD.

Commius eventually led the Gallic Atrebates in Vercingetorix's army that rose against Caesar in 52BC ending any friendship with Caesar and Rome. His apparent changing of sides in Gaul and Britain did little to affect his status as stated above, but highlights the fluid nature of tribal politics.

The British Atrebates retained their anti-Roman attitude in 54BC, but changed it after the death of Commius, sometime after 50BC.<sup>22</sup> Under Commius' son Tincommius, the Atrebates maintained a pro-Roman stand and became major players in the events of the Roman invasion of 43AD. After the Claudian invasion of 43AD the British Atrebates were given client status under the rule of Cogidubnus who held nominal authority into the 70s AD.<sup>23</sup>

In 54BC Caesar, with a force of around thirty thousand troops made up of the VIIth, the Xth, possibly the XIVth, and two other legions (the exact make up of the task force is unknown) and four thousand cavalry, set sail from Boulogne for a second expedition to Britain.<sup>24</sup>

The Atrebates, again, supported their Cantiaci neighbours and joined an allied confederation led by Cassivellaunus, the leader of the large tribal grouping west of the Thames.<sup>25</sup> Cassivellaunus will be discussed in the first case study, but its important to note that while he was absent from the tribal army that responded to Caesar in 55BC, he had been present and aggressively active in 54BC as Caesar's second raid moved deeper inland.

Northeast of the Thames River was the Trinovante who Caesar describes as the 'strongest state in this part of the country'.<sup>26</sup> The Trinovante were not noted as being present in

the tribal opposition to Caesar in 55BC, but appeared a year later in the tribal confederation led by Cassivellaunus. The Trinovante were also the first tribe to submit to Caesar in 54BC and break from the confederation.<sup>27</sup>

The Trinovantian break from the British confederation exposed the fragility of pan-tribal unity. The Trinovante had been at war with their western neighbours during the first half of the first century BC; this could explain the motivations for their submission to Rome in 54BC.<sup>28</sup>

Mandubracius was a former Trinovantian chieftain who had sought Caesar's help in restoring him to the leadership of his tribe. Mandubracius approached Caesar in Gaul after the death of his father Imanuentios, during clashes with Cassivellaunus.<sup>29</sup> This was the first time a British tribal chief had taken a grievance to Rome with the intention of gaining tribal political control, by aligning himself to the military power of Caesar.

The actions of Mandubracius set a precedent for British chiefs taking their personal grievances to Rome. A similar incident of this kind was used by Claudius as one reason for the invasion of Britain in 43AD. The idea of solid and sustained pan-tribal resistance to Rome is unrealistic and the actions of the Trinovante are an example of a tribe willing to turn their backs on tribal confederation as an act of self-preservation. This action was taken by the Dobunni in 43AD (to be discussed later), and on both occasions fully exploited by Rome.

Trinovante policy would have been shaped by the events of the time and they were simply reacting to the immediate threat posed by Cassivellaunus. The Trinovante were not present during the Cantiacian led opposition to Caesar in 55BC and appear to have supported Cassivellaunus prior to the approach of Caesar in 54BC. With the death of Imanuentios and the exile of his son, control of the



Trinovante in 54BC is unclear and may have come from outside their tribal elite who were powerless to direct the Trinovante response.

In 54BC, Mandubracius arrived in the train of the Roman army and with his reinstatement, the tribal attitude changed to a pro-Roman stance. Before Caesar moved west, the main threat to the Trinovante lay with Cassivellaunus, but by 54BC the Trinovante saw that the balance of power was changing and acted to secure their own position. They became the first of the British tribes to submit to Caesar and ask for Roman protection against other British tribes.<sup>30</sup>

On the withdrawal of Caesar and his legions from Britain, the Trinovante gained a promise from Cassivellaunus that Mandubracius and his tribe would not be harmed.<sup>31</sup> Despite this arrangement brokered by Caesar, the Trinovante would be totally absorbed into the kingdom of the Catuvellauni by 10AD.<sup>32</sup> The absorption of the Trinovante and the creation of a large trading empire at the expense of other tribes following Caesar's raids in 55 and 54BC, continued an environment of tribal division and resentment that would hinder the Catuvellauni in their attempt to hold together a tribal confederation in 43AD.

The Trinovante did not disappear from British history after the loss of tribal autonomy to the Catuvellauni, but remained a tribal entity up to and beyond the destructive era of the Boudiccan revolt. Their role will be looked at in chapter five. Their dealings with Rome and Cassivellaunus shows deep tribal divides that dictated decision making with regard to actions taken by British tribes against Roman invasion.

Tribal division was also an underlying factor in the fragility of tribal confederations and response to invasion with the tribes that lived beyond the lands of the Atrebatas. Lying to the west were the large tribal groupings of the



Durotriges and the Dumnonii. If the Channel represented the edge of the known world for the Romans, what did the Channel and the Atlantic represent to the Iron Age people of Britain?

The British Isles had a long tradition of trade links with the continent and the Mediterranean world dating hundreds of years prior to Caesar. The tribes of the Atlantic coast of southern Britain and eastern Gaul especially, enjoyed close trade links, and with the sharing of trade goods came the exchange of ideas. An example of the sharing of ideas was seen in the Durotriges who adopted silver coinage prior to Caesar to standardise trade with Armorican tribes whose economy was based on that currency.<sup>33</sup>

The Durotriges and Dumnonii were British tribes who shared more in common with the coastal tribes of Armorica (modern Brittany in France) than with their northern and eastern neighbours.<sup>34</sup> The Iron Age people of Atlantic coastal Gaul and Britain saw the Channel more as a communication link and trade route than a physical barrier. The link between the Dumnonii and Durotriges of Britain and the Armorican tribes must be looked at in the context of military response to Rome and the reasons for their decision to resist.

Caesar stated, as motivation for his attacks, a desire to punish those Britons that had fought him in Gaul. Military support from British to Gallic tribes along corresponding areas of the Channel and Atlantic coastlines suggests common motives in the need to resist Roman military advances. Was the driving factor behind British tribesmen fighting in Gaul been out of economic motivation as opposed to some vague concept of protecting Gallic or British freedom? The deployment of British warriors and supplies to Armorican Gaul may have come from the need to protect age-old trade routes that benefited both parties.

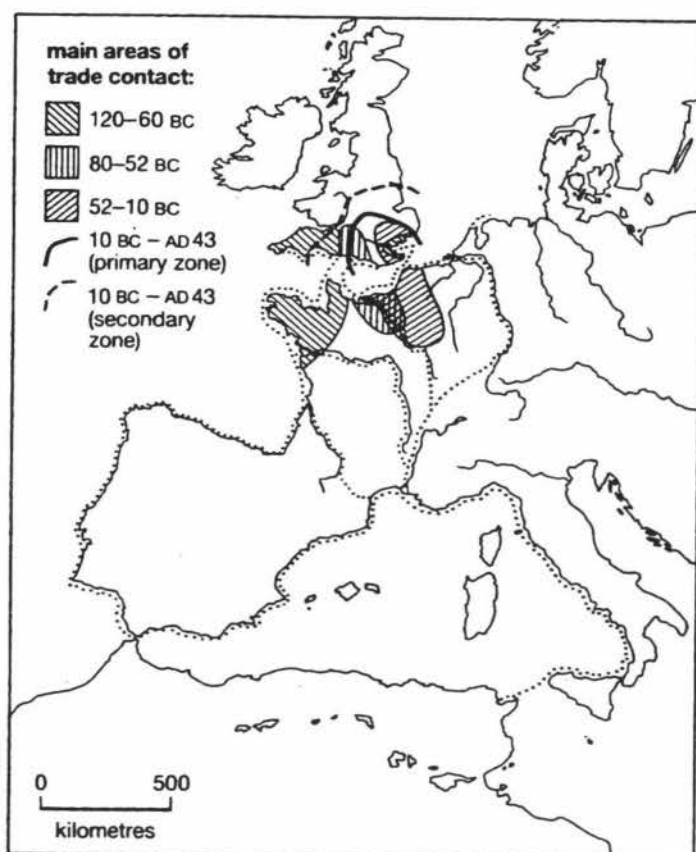
Economics always plays a role in the motivation for conquest and equally in the response and resistance to military threat. Tribal competition over the control of trade routes and goods, and the moves to defend them, would have created an environment that required a united front against, what was considered an external threat. For the Trinovante, allegiance to Rome was a release from the pressure exerted by Cassivellaunus, for the Durotriges and Dumnonii Rome was seen in a very different light after 56BC.

The discovery of Armorican coins in the tribal territories of the Durotriges and the Dumnonii supports the possibility that their aid to Armorican tribes was based on economic necessity rather than a notion of pan-tribal freedom. Coin distribution is more widespread in the land of the Durotriges, with only one hoard of silver coins being found at Mount Batten in the land of the Dumnonii. Coin movement went both ways, with southern British coins being found in Armorica and Belgic Gaul (some even reaching as far east as modern day Germany and Denmark).<sup>35</sup>

Leading up to 55BC, cross-Channel trade fell within the tribal territories of the most southern region. From 120-60BC it is seen that the Dumnonii, Durotriges and the Veneti shared trade dominance across the Channel. Between 80 and 52BC it shifted eastward focusing around the land of the Durotriges and Atrebates.<sup>36</sup>

The Veneti lost control of trade in the area following their total destruction by Caesar in 56BC. Caesar's victory over the Veneti at Quiberon Bay meant that they could not physically oppose him again in Gaul. He put all their tribal elders to death and sold the remainder of the population into slavery.<sup>37</sup> Caesar gained the control of trade in the area once the Veneti were destroyed.<sup>38</sup> After Caesar's military operations in Britain and down to 10BC, the main area of cross-Channel trade moved to the land of the Atrebates in

southeast Britain, the Thames Estuary and the region of the Seine River in Gaul.<sup>39</sup>



Map 4. Trade contacts between Britain and the Continent. (From Jones and Mattingly. 1990 p 58).

The realignment of trade from south Britain to the east was followed by the devaluation of Durotrige coinage and Cunliffe believes that this also reflected a desire by Caesar to further punish those British tribes who had aided the Veneti in 56BC.<sup>40</sup> From a detailed study of Caesar's expeditions in Britain (which will be discussed in the next chapter) it is clear that he lacked the ability to directly punish those southwestern tribes who had supported Gallic tribes, so he therefore sought to affect their continental trade links with a Gaul that was falling under more direct Roman control.

The absence of Durotrigian and Dumnonic warriors at Dover in 55BC appears out of character with their anti-Roman attitude when it is recorded (by Caesar) that the Veneti had help from southern British tribes in 56BC.<sup>41</sup> These tribes could have supplied warriors to aid the Cantiaci and stop Caesar on the shore of Britain but they didn't, and there is no record of them sending warriors to support Cassivellaunus in 54BC, either. Their economic interests and therefore military focus was across the Channel, and after 56BC, their own tribal areas in southern Britain.

Distance would have played an important role in the lack of military support given to the Cantiaci by the Durotriges and Dumnonii. The geographical distance from the land of the Durotriges, and more so the Dumnonii, would have been imposing during the late Iron Age. From Hod Hill, the centre of Durotriges territory, to the Dover coast is a distance of over 250 kilometres. From the Dumnonii settlement at Mount Batten it is over 450 kilometres. The logistics alone would be difficult in a potentially hostile country. These factors and strong trade links to Armorican give legitimate reasons for the undertaking of local defence rather than sending support east in 55 or 54BC so soon after the defeat in Armorica in 56BC.

Military response in the south and southwest took the form of intensive hill fort reoccupation and modification. It was at the time of Caesar's victory over the Veneti that Armorican tactical innovations made their way to the lands of these western tribes, the major one being sling warfare. Maiden Castle, in the land of the Durotriges has provided archaeological evidence of the adoption of sling warfare with a hoard of some 38,000 stones found within the ramparts.<sup>42</sup>

The sling tactics also had implications for the remodelling of hill forts in the tribal regions of the southwest. The changes came in the form of the complex hill fort entrances

as seen at Maiden castle, Hod Hill and Hambledon.<sup>43</sup> These types of outworks were designed to confront would-be attackers with 'a long tortuous corridor approach of more than 240ft (73 m), winding in and out between earthworks which shielded strategically placed platforms designed, no doubt, to be manned by defenders with slings.'<sup>44</sup> Some hill fort designs were a move towards the adoption of sling warfare and the positioning of platforms further handicapped attacking infantry who would have carried their shield on their left side, thus exposing the right side.<sup>45</sup>

Caesar never made it as far east as the Durotriges and they remained untouched by direct Roman military action in Britain. However in wiping out the Veneti naval power, Caesar indirectly realigned the axis of trade eastward (in favour of the Trinovantes and later the Atrebates).

The decline in Durotrige trade would have satisfied the Roman general's thirst to punish British support to the Armorican tribes. The direct military actions of Caesar prompted a shift in cross Channel trade and had a lasting effect on the political make-up of southeastern Britain that impacted on the period from 55BC to 43AD.

Before moving onto British tribal response to the Claudian invasion of 43AD, a brief survey will look at other tribes within Britain and their position at the time of Caesar's raids of 55 and 54BC.

The Iceni occupied the area north of the Trinovantes (Norfolk and East Anglia). They, like other tribes, do not appear to have been present in the tribal force that opposed Caesar in 55BC. There is however the mention of a tribe, the Cenimagni, who negotiated with Caesar in 54BC.<sup>46</sup> It has been suggested that this may have been the Iceni who enjoyed autonomous rule free from the influence of Cassivellaunus or the Trinovante.<sup>47</sup>

The wealth of the Iceni elite is shown through archaeological finds at Snettisham, Bawsey and North Creake, with hoards containing torcs and arm-rings of gold and electrum. There are also rich finds in elaborate horse-trappings<sup>48</sup>. This proof of wealth suggests that the Iceni benefited from securing trade-links to the continent and possibly a degree of clientage from Rome after Caesar's departure.<sup>49</sup> Their action in 43AD also point to strong pro-Roman leadership within the Iceni. This position changed violently and dramatically however, in 61AD.

West of the Iceni were the tribal lands of the Coritani, to their southwest the Cornovii, and to their south, the Dobunni. These tribes lay well outside of the military actions of Caesar in 55 and 54BC, and are not mentioned in relation to military response to Roman invasion during that period.

The distance to the area of fighting may have been a factor in tribal attitudes and the deciding to not fight and could explain the absence of these tribes in 55 and 54BC (both Cornovii and Coritani being upwards of 200 kilometres from Dover).

The Dobunni, however, were not affected by this problem in 43AD, which suggests that movement over long distances could indeed be achieved. The fact that these tribes were not mentioned in 54BC does not necessarily mean that they were absent from the tribal army Cassivellaunus raised from the tribes west of the Thames. There is currently no proof that they were present. Leading up to the Claudian invasion, these tribes (especially the Dobunni) were drawn into the political movements of the expanding Catuvellauni and their rivals the Atrebates.

The western hill-tribes of Wales, like their eastern neighbours, lay outside the sphere of Roman aggression under Caesar. They did feel the full impact of Roman

military aggression in the middle of the first century AD as Rome sought to stabilize Britain as a province.

The withdrawal of Caesar in 54BC may have been viewed with mixed feelings by the tribes of Britain. The Trinovante and possibly the Iceni would have felt secure in the knowledge that they had gained protection from the Romans. Cassivellaunus, on the other hand, may arguably have felt his plans of expansion checked, or at least stalled, by the terms he is said to have agreed upon with Caesar on his withdrawal.

The Atrebates, under the pro-Roman Tincommius (son of Commius), gained success in trade links with the continent after the death of his father and worked at building up a strong trade-based tribal unit that would rival the rising force of the Catuvellauni (the emergence of this tribal grouping will be discussed below).

The Catuvellauni were a tribal grouping that rose to prominence after 54BC from the area that Cassivellaunus had dominated west of the Thames. This tribe followed a policy of antagonism towards the Trinovantes and followed the acts of open aggression that characterised the actions of Cassivellaunus.

What followed in southeast Britain between 54BC and 43AD was a state of flux with the emergence of powerful tribal units. These developed into the core, periphery zones and beyond, that competed for the all important trade dominance of eastern Britain and the movement of trade goods to and from the continent.

The Trinovante suffered under the aggressive expansion of the Catuvellauni, and by 10AD their capital Camulodunum was minting Catuvellauni coinage. The taking of Camulodunum by the Catuvellauni coincided with the defeat of Varus and his three legions in the Teutoberg forest across the Rhine in 9AD and could explain the boldness of



the Catuvellaunian move against the Trinovantes and also the lack of response from the Roman Emperor Augustus.<sup>50</sup> The defeat in the Teutoberg forest halted Augustus' plans for Roman expansion.

The breaking of the treaty arranged by Caesar and the decline of the Trinovante as an independent tribal group should have warranted Roman reaction, yet the defeat in 9AD beyond the Rhine may have given the Catuvellauni the confidence to act against the pro-Roman Trinovantes, while Augustus' alliance with the Atrebates maintained a desired counter-balance for the expanding Catuvellauni.<sup>51</sup> This raises the question of how distant did the British tribes perceive Rome to be in 10AD?

That the Catuvellauni moved against the pro-Roman Trinovantes suggests that Rome held no real threat to tribes in Britain in the first decade AD, and events that followed on the continent (discussed below) would have only reinforced this belief.<sup>52</sup> For now, Rome was only a distant threat that had not crossed the Channel in sixty-five years.

The conquest of Britain was an issue for Gaius and Claudius, and indeed had been for all the Roman rulers since Julius Caesar had crossed the Channel. The perceived martial prowess of Gaius and Claudius, and the driving force of their own egos, successively pushed the possibility for an invasion of Britain closer as they sought to gain reputations in war.

The northern frontier policies of Rome leading up to the reign of Claudius in 41AD incorporated Britain and were closely linked, emotionally and strategically to the Rhine and Germany. Any move into Britain would require a stabilized frontier along the Rhine for strategic reasons. Emotionally, the Rhine frontier had been where both Germanicus (father to Gaius) and Drusus (father to Claudius) had won their martial reputations.<sup>53</sup>



During the reign of both Augustus and Tiberius, the Roman administration may have viewed Britain as part of the Empire, although not under direct rule. Levick claims that the revenue from customs duties was more profitable than employing direct imperial rule to a province that would have to be conquered then stabilized.<sup>54</sup> The actions of British Chiefs in 16AD also point to some kind of diplomatic cooperation between the tribes of eastern Britain and Rome. In 16AD Roman ships were lost at sea while campaigning down the Wesser (east of the Rhine). Roman soldiers were washed up on the British coast and were handed over with no apparent delay.<sup>55</sup>

The safe return of the Roman soldiers suggests that there may have been a pro-Roman influence in eastern Britain, which Augustus and Tiberius continued to maintain indirectly through diplomatic measures and trade avenues. It was in Rome's interest to maintain any pro-Roman elements in eastern Britain, securing direct and indirect trade connections, leaving open the possibility for invasion and it was with the Atrebates that Augustus fostered close links.

The *Res Gestae* notes the presence of British tribal leaders Dumnobellaunus and Tincommius who sought refuge at the court of Augustus and are titled 'kings of the Britons'.<sup>56</sup> Dumnobellaunus of Kent, who had been ousted from Camulodunum by Cunobelin around 7AD, joined Tincommius the Atrebate chief in Rome. This early entry accounts for diplomatic relations between Augustus and Britain and that Rome continued to be the destination of ousted tribal chiefs from Britain. The path to Rome taken by Tincommius around 7AD was followed by another Atrebate chief Verica in 42AD and suggests the continuation of close diplomatic ties between the Atrebates of Britain and Rome.<sup>57</sup>

After 9AD and with the expansion of the Catuvellauni, Augustus may have only been able to watch and grudgingly

accept the decline of the Trinovantes and tolerate Cunobelin (leader of the Catuvellauni) diplomatically, while continuing support for the Atrebrates.

Augustus' toleration may also have come from a view that the expansion of Cunobelin (who held warm diplomatic relations with Rome) benefited Rome, justifying its support of the Atrebrates and therefore maintaining a presence, even indirectly in southeastern Britain. Whatever the reasons, Tiberius saw it prudent to follow the policy of Augustus and continued links with the Atrebate.<sup>58</sup>

Gaius moved north to the Rhine in 39AD (having become the Emperor in Rome in 37AD) and accepted the surrender of Adminius (Cunobelin's son) in 40AD.<sup>59</sup> The stabilization of the Rhine frontier was followed by an unusual and much discussed incident where Gaius' proposed invasion of Britain was followed by the comical command for his troops (who had gathered for the invasion) to collect shells from the Gallic beach at Boulogne as 'plunder from the ocean'.<sup>60</sup>

The actions of Gaius would have been known to the British tribes in the southeast and watched with interest or concern especially the most eastern tribes. The memory of Caesar in 55 and 54BC would have faded and his raids quite possibly seen as more of a victory for Cassivellaunus in the sense that Roman soldiers had failed to return to Britain after Caesar.<sup>61</sup>

Gaius' trip to the Rhine and then the Channel came to nothing militarily as far as Britain was concerned. The surrender of Adminius did however, showed a continuation in policy started by the Trinovante of British chiefs appealing to Rome to settle tribal matters. It would have been a situation Rome encouraged.

In 41AD Gaius was assassinated and his uncle Claudius became ruler in Rome. In Britain, Cunobelin was dead and his sons Caratacus and Togodumnus were in joint leadership

of the Catuvellauni, with Togodumnus based in Camulodunum<sup>62</sup> and Caratacus in Silchester.<sup>63</sup> In 43AD a full-scale Roman invasion of Britain was launched. There had been a major shift to the attitude of the Catuvellauni towards Rome and this coincided with Claudius' quest for the acquisition of a military reputation in Britain.

In the summer of 43AD Aulus Plautius, who commanded a Roman force of four legions in the name of the Emperor Claudius, launched an invasion of southeastern Britain from Boulogne. These legions were the II Augusta and the XX Valeria, who would remain in Britain for almost 400 years, the XIV Gemina and the IX Hispana.<sup>64</sup>

The legions constituted twenty thousand soldiers, five hundred legion cavalry, seven hundred and fifty artillery and cartage personal and an additional two thousand, one hundred and twenty five assigned to baggage.<sup>65</sup> An independent five thousand strong cavalry formation and five hundred personnel for baggage accompanied the legions, while an auxiliary force of fifteen thousand soldiers and one thousand, five hundred extra baggage personnel complimented the legions and cavalry formation.<sup>66</sup>

The Roman army totalled a force of forty five thousand, three hundred and seventy five personnel with fourteen thousand, seven hundred and fifty animals. It required nine hundred and thirty three ships to transport it.<sup>67</sup> This was a sizable force for the invasion of Britain.

As in 54BC, the Cantiaci felt the immediate impact of the Roman invasion that landed in their territory. The landing was unopposed on the beaches, which enabled Plautius to build a strong beachhead at Richborough in Kent.<sup>68</sup> One reason for the absence of any opposition to the landing has been put down to events on the continent. Prior to the departure of the Roman invasion force, a mutiny broke out that may have encouraged the British to reduce their forces

guarding the coast and move their army inland.<sup>69</sup> The bulk of the tribal forces were part time warriors. This factor would have made it hard to maintain them in the field for any length of time and the stalling of the invasion fleet, while not deliberate, played into Plautius' hand.

With a beachhead established, the invasion force moved inland skirmishing its way westward against the Cantiaci until reaching the river Medway where a large tribal force awaited the Romans. The estimated number of warriors the British tribes put into the field in their opposition to the Claudian invasion was one hundred and fifty thousand.<sup>70</sup> This number is broken up into tribal contingents, with the Catuvellauni supplying the most at seventy thousand. The Trinovante number is put at forty thousand while the Atrebates were estimated at ten thousand, the Dobunni seven thousand and finally twenty three thousand from the Kentish tribes.<sup>71</sup>

What motivated these tribes to supply warriors in response to the invasion will be looked at tribe by tribe. Leading up to the invasion, Britain, as already noted, was in a state of flux. The Catuvellauni were pushing into the lands of the Cantiaci who lost independence around the early twenties AD. The Catuvellauni were also competing with the pro-Roman Atrebates under Tincommius and Verica (Commius' sons).<sup>72</sup> Their pro-Roman stance continued up to and beyond 43AD and their rule has been traced through the distributions of tribal coinage.<sup>73</sup>

The Dobunni to the west also felt the pressure of an expanding Catuvellauni who were pushing into their northeastern border. The Dobunni occupied one of the prime areas of economic importance or periphery zones that linked the eastern trade core regions of the Trinovantes and Catuvellauni (joined by 10AD), the southern Durotriges (although somewhat diminished after Caesar and also within

the periphery zone) and the Atrebates, to the raw materials of the west.<sup>74</sup>

The Dobunni were a tribe divided with the southern faction showing anti-Roman sentiment while the northwestern faction were pro-Roman and when the Roman invasion came, the Dobunni shrewdly sent support to the tribal army that was moving to oppose the invaders.

In 43AD the Dobunni were geographically removed from events in the southeast, but pressure put on factions of the Dobunni by the Catuvellauni meant they might have been required to send support east. If the Catuvellauni managed to withstand the invading Romans, the Dobunni would continue their current economic partnership. However, if things went wrong for the Catuvellauni dominated army, the Dobunni would be well placed to act without the fear of military or economic pressure from the Catuvellauni and take a place in the new political order.

Benefiting from this situation, the Dobunni prudently sent war bands east in 43AD, their presence recorded by Dio.<sup>75</sup> The Dobunni submitted to Rome in 43AD. This was a sobering example of the divided nature of tribal politics and how it affected the tribal deliberations in response to Roman invasion.

The tribal confederation that faced the Romans was by no means a solid united tribal army, and the command of Caratacus and Togodumnus was weakened, not by any failure in their leadership or tactical ability, but out of a weakness in cross-tribal politics that would eventually undermine the initial military response to Roman aggression in 43AD.

The first sign that the tribal confederation had a weakness arose with the Dobunni defection to the Romans prior to the two-day battle at the Medway. Dio wrote of a tribe he called the "Bodunni" who capitulated to Plautius; he is clearly

talking about the Dobunni.<sup>76</sup> The Dobunni position and their possible motivations for this strategic decision impacted considerably on the tribal confederation and seriously undermined its tactical position at the Medway, not least the loss of seven thousand warriors and provisions.

Leading up to 43AD, the Dobunni showed both pro and anti Roman attitudes seen in the issuing of coinage. The northwestern area under Boduocus issued Roman style coins while Corio of the southern Dobunni issued 'more traditional coinage'.<sup>77</sup> The Dobunnic division highlights how problematic tribal politics could be in facing military invasion from Rome, and the capitulation of the Dobunni prior to the Medway was a continuation of pro-Roman policy by a section of the tribe.

Another strategic dimension to the Dobunni decision to side with the Romans may have been out of their geographical proximity to the Welsh tribes and possibly a perceived or historical threat from the west. Whether Rome had any diplomatic dealings in the Dobunnic change of attitude towards the Romans is uncertain. The outcome at the Medway in favour of the Romans was a definite sign that the Catuvellauni were on the way out. Webster believes that the Atrebatian, Cogidubnus exerted diplomatic pressure on the Dobunni and this could have encouraged them to withdraw from the confederation.<sup>78</sup>

The destruction of the Catuvellauni created a power vacuum in the changing tide of political domination in Britain that Rome filled. The Dobunni's actions after the battle at the Medway helped to establish their position in the new order; the consequences of which will be discussed below.

The Trinovante had ceased to be an independent tribal unit after the Catuvellauni aggressively moved into their territory and took control around 10AD, yet there were a

large number of Trinovante warriors in the confederation that faced the Romans in 43AD. These warriors possibly represented those Trinovante who gained some form of tribal authority under the domination of the Catuvellauni (or were indeed Catuvellaunian nobles who held power in that area) and would have mobilized their tribal warriors under the command of Togodumnus whose seat of power was at the old Trinovantian capital of Camulodunum.

Care should be taken when describing the forty thousand Trinovantes as purely Trinovante. This tribal group was the first to enter into alliance with the Romans in 54BC and they had sought the protection of Rome against Cassivellaunus. By 43AD nearly one hundred years had passed, thirty-three of which was under the domination of the Catuvellauni.

The bulk of the Trinovante warriors may have been tribal levies and/or non-free subjects of the Catuvellauni. If these tribal levies were still aware of their own tribal identity then it may have put a question mark over their reliability in battle.

Following the fall of Camulodunum and the defeat of the Catuvellauni as a dominant military force in southeast Britain the Trinovante lands were heavily colonized. What followed were land confiscations and the establishment of a veteran's colony and an imperial temple to Claudius (which the Trinovante or natives of that area would have paid for) on the site of their ancestral capital at Camulodunum.<sup>79</sup> These factors would cause much trouble leading up to 60AD.

The Iceni did not send any support to the Confederation of tribes who opposed Rome in 43AD. This may have been due to their independence from Catuvellauni control. They must have watched with alarm as the Catuvellauni moved in and took over the large tribal area of the Trinovantes (just south of their territory) in the opening decades of the first century AD. The Iceni may have sought some kind of assurance by



establishing diplomatic ties with the Roman as seen in 54BC, and possible protection during this period.<sup>80</sup> This had not saved the Trinovante from Catuvellauni annexation.

In 43AD the Iceni chief Prasutagus (the husband of Boudicca) gained the leadership of the Iceni as a client of Rome, as way of reward for their friendship to Rome.<sup>81</sup> The absence of the Iceni in 43 may have been because of an agreement made with Rome and the position Prasutagus gained, reward for keeping Iceni warriors from the field.

Client kingdoms were a standard Roman practice of frontier policy and were seen in Britain throughout the period of Roman control. The Iceni held this position after 43AD, as did the Atrebates under Cogidubnus and the Northern confederation of the Brigantes under Cartimandua. The Iceni however, would provide Rome with its biggest threat to the stabilization of Britain as a prosperous province, as it boiled over into violent rebellion in 60AD as their client arrangement ended.

Between the Iceni and the Dobunni was another of the periphery tribes, the Coritani. This tribe, as in 54BC, did not send warriors to oppose the Roman invasion of 43AD and while the distance factor has been discussed, the Coritani, like other British tribes, may have felt pressure from the expanding Catuvellauni. The defeat of the Catuvellauni by the Romans may have benefited the Coritani in removing a traditional enemy. The ease in which the Romans moved through their territory after the invasion suggests their acceptance of the new military force in Britain or their inability to do anything about it.<sup>82</sup>

The Atrebates was another tribe who, despite a record of pro-Roman leadership, sent warriors to join the tribal confederation that opposed the Roman invasion. As seen above, the Atrebates followed a pro-Roman policy in the first century AD and even made inroads into the territory of the



Cantiaci prior to the successful expansion of the Catuvellauni into Kent around 20AD.

Like the Dobunni, the Atrebates were a tribe divided as members of the ruling families competed for the domination of the tribe. The Atrebates and the Dobunni both felt the expanding influence of the Catuvellauni leading up to 43AD and both tribes participated in opposition to the Roman invasion suggesting political pressure from the Catuvellauni that may have manifested in anti-Roman factions within the Atrebates and Dobunni.

Archaeological evidence supports the division in attitudes towards Rome in Atrebat territory by close investigation of hill fort refortification and abandonment. Hill forts, such as Caburn in the east and some in the north-west were reoccupied or refortified prior to the Roman invasion, while the Atrebat south-west show no sign of refortification or opposition to Rome.<sup>83</sup>

Catuvellauni pressure on the eastern and northwestern Atrebates could explain their large number present (ten thousand) in the force that opposed the Roman invasion in 43AD. However, like the Trinovante, these warriors could have represented elements of a tribe under the political control of a Catuvellaunian elite and/or an anti-Roman tribal faction.

Tiberius Claudius Cogidubnus was an Atrebat noble who gained the leadership of the tribe after 43AD and who was staunchly Roman (as his name suggests). His rise to power was a direct result of Roman military support and followed the capitulation of eleven British chiefs at the initial stage of the invasion.<sup>84</sup> Under the leadership of Cogidubnus, the Atrebates remained firm allies to the Romans, gaining the status of a client kingdom for their support, lasting until his death in the mid 70s AD.<sup>85</sup>

The Atrebates gained a strong political position after the invasion at the expense of their traditional trade rival, the Catuvellauni, and those tribes who had suffered as a result of Cunobelin's expansion filled the power vacuum created by their destruction. Of the tribes who occupied the core zone of southeastern Britain, the Atrebates gained the most. The Catuvellauni (who incorporated the Trinovantes and Cantiaci) were gone and the periphery tribes of the Iceni and Dobunni were well placed to benefit from the new order.

In 55 and 54BC the Durotriges and Dumnonii had not sent warriors east to fight against Caesar in Kent and had instead seen to the security of their own territories. The Durotriges, again looked to their own defence in 43AD, yet this self-defensive response was one of open hostility and opposition to the Roman advance. Both classical reference and archaeological evidence show this.<sup>86</sup>

The Durotriges responded to the Roman advance by refortifying and occupying their hill forts. Some of the hill forts and tribal settlements refortified at this time were South Cadbury, the impressive defences of Maiden Castle and Hod Hill. The Durotriges appear to have entrusted their tribal survival to the protection of their numerous hill forts for defence against the Romans.<sup>87</sup>

The political structure of the Durotriges by 43AD was more decentralized than that of the southeastern tribes and a situation of political anarchy was perpetuated by the martial activities of a large number of rival nobles.<sup>88</sup> This could help explain why the Durotriges decided on the strategy to defend their smaller tribal areas from within their hill forts as opposed to a united front. This, however, allowed the Roman force to move up to the walls of the hill forts unopposed and successfully storm them.

This policy was disastrous; for once there the Roman artillery (consisting of ballistas, and onagers)<sup>89</sup> would open

up, out distancing and driving off the British slingers on the ramparts. Then the infantry would march up, forming into *testudo* (a solid shield formation resembling a turtle) enabling them to navigate the intricate defensive entranceways effectively unhindered and attack through the weakest part of the hill forts defences, the gate.<sup>90</sup>

The hill fort was designed for defence against the tribal armies of the Iron Age Britons, not the highly trained and armed forces of the Roman Army and while the maze type entranceways stalled the massed attacks of tribal warriors, they failed to stop the disciplined attack of the Roman Legion.

The force moving into Durotriges territory from across the rivers Avon and Stour was the II Legion Augusta, under the command of the future emperor Vespasian.<sup>91</sup> Plautius sent Vespasian west in either late 43, or early 44AD to secure the southwestern flank of the Roman advance.<sup>92</sup> He succeeded and it was noted that Vespasian fought thirty battles, defeating two major tribes (the Durotriges and probably the Dumnonii or Atrebates), and taking the Isle of Wight and over twenty hill forts.<sup>93</sup>

This was serious campaigning that took one quarter of the invasion force and the *Classis Britannica* (the British fleet or squadron of the Roman navy) to successfully achieve Plautius wishes. The forces of the II Legion marched against the hill fort defences and reduced them one by one, sometimes with great loss of life for the defenders. One site, Spettisbury Rings, was excavated in 1857 where eighty to ninety skeletons were recovered, and the grave cemetery at Maiden Castle and the ballista finds at Hod Hill are all testament to the assaults and fighting that took place.<sup>94</sup> The Durotriges decided to resist the invaders hill fort by hill fort, rather than in a united front and failed.

The Durotriges received Armorican refugees (defeated by Caesar) in 56BC and these elements may have complemented existing strong anti-Roman feeling up to 60AD. Archaeological evidence shows that they rose against the Romans at the time of the Iceni revolt. Armorican technology was seen in the adoption of slings and may have accompanied anti-Roman refugees.

Economic and political reasons should not be ignored in explaining Durotrigian opposition to Rome. As discussed earlier, the cross-channel trade axis shifted from the Veneti/Durotriges bloc after Caesar's destruction of the Veneti in 56BC and his invasion in 54BC, to one dominated by the Atrebates. The Atrebates were also trying to expand their sphere of influence in competition to the Catuvellauni and the Durotriges and may have suffered at the hands of the expansionist pro-Roman Atrebates, while experiencing economic decline.

The north eastern Durotriges could have been under Catuvellaunian political influence and held anti-Roman feelings like those Atrebates who had split from their pro-Roman tribal faction.<sup>95</sup> The Durotriges showed continuity in their response to Roman invasion. As seen in 55 and 54BC, the Durotriges saw to their own defence in 43AD and were not present in the Catuvellauni led tribal army that opposed the full scale Roman invasion.

The Dumnonii and the Welsh tribes were of little strategic importance to the initial Roman advance and the subjugation of the Durotriges effectively neutralised Dumnonic threats to any further Roman push into Britain. In direct contrast to the Durotriges, the Dumnonii appear to have held a neutral or even friendly stance with regard to the Romans.

Their hill forts do not appear to have been of a defensive nature (more designed for stock protection) and the Romans did not require occupation forces like those seen in the lands

of the Durotriges. The existence of two isolated signal stations in Dumnonic territory and the speed with which Dumnonic silver mines were open to the Romans also suggest some kind of friendly agreement between the Dumnonii and Rome.<sup>96</sup>

Vespasian's move against the north-western Durotriges enabled the Romans to reach the Bristol Channel and gave him a logistically sound base for possible action against Wales, while also cutting out the hazardous sea journey around Land's End.<sup>97</sup> This action was effective in securing Devon and the whole of the Cornish peninsula and thus neutralising the Dumnonii.

The Welsh tribes became involved in a long and fierce opposition to Rome under the command of Caratacus. However, they did not send any support to the southeastern tribes and showed no affinity to the opposition organized against the Romans. It was not until the invaders began to make moves towards their own tribal territories that some of the tribes stirred into action. The lack of empathy for the east, interestingly, did not stop Caratacus (a Catuvellaunian from the south east) gaining leadership over some of the Welsh tribes and this point will be explored below.

The first chapter discussed the Belgic origins of some of the tribal groupings in southeast Britain. How this affected tribal response to the Roman invasion can be seen by briefly analysing tribal response with particular focus on the Belgic question. The tribal groups who lived beyond the southeast did not rally in force to the banner of resistance in 55 or 54BC. This was mirrored in 43AD. These non-Belgic tribes only responded once their territories came under the threat of attack. Of the non-Belgic tribes in 43AD, the Dumnonii alone appear to have shown warm neutrality in their attitudes towards Rome.

The Durotriges prepared to resist Caesar within their tribal lands in 54BC. They continued this stance in 43-44AD failing to withstand Vespasian and his force. They then rose again in 60AD, which points to continued anti-Roman attitudes. The Durotriges were targeted by the Romans in 43AD and heavily garrisoned post-conquest justified by their anti-Roman attitude and response.

The tribes west of the Thames rose against Rome under Cassivellaunus. Caesar wrote of their native origin and they represents, like the Durotriges, non-Belgic opposition to the Roman invasion. The rise of the Catuvellauni out of the tribal groups west of the Thames provides a continuation of non-Belgic resistance to Rome in 43AD.

The Belgic Trinovante submitted to Caesar in 54BC, as did the Cenimagni or Iceni who also had Belgic origins. This attitude of submission to Rome was continued by the Iceni in 43AD, while the Trinovante were subjugated by the Catuvellauni and were possibly unable to separate themselves from the decisions of Caratacus and Togodumnus.

The Belgic Cantiaci and the Atrebates resisted Caesar in 55 and 54BC but by 43AD the dominant faction of the Atrebates was staunchly pro-Roman. The Belgae faction of the Atrebate resisted Rome but were defeated and incorporated into the client kingdom of Cogidubnus after 43AD. The Cantiaci resisted Rome in 43AD but were quickly subdued and their lands pacified.

The Belgic/non-Belgic origins of the tribal groupings do not appear to have influenced the response to Rome one way or another. The tribal responses were varied and do not appear to have conformed to Belgic or non-Belgic trends or influences. Factions within tribes however, may have held pro or anti-Roman attitudes more from tribal competition,

and Rome simply offered an opportunity to take political control.

This chapter shows that the responses to Roman aggression by the Iron Age tribes of Britain were varied and had differing motivations, be they economic, political or simply out of some sense of revenge. The concept of any pan-tribal “cause” which drew the tribes together in the face of Roman invasion is weak. There were too many differences within the political, economic and ethnic composition of the various British tribes that ensured any attempt at a united front was doomed to fail against a determined Roman invasion.

The idea of an Iron Age British nation, given to an area that experienced pan-tribal divisions as serious barriers to any united tribal alliance is naive. The tribes of Iron Age Britain responded to Rome out of a desire to preserve ‘tribal’ identity rather than any form of a pan-British identity, and stands against the notion that any such British sentiment even existed.<sup>98</sup>

It took Caesar eight years to subdue the tribes of Gaul to a level where the process of Romanisation could effectively bring that part of Western Europe into the Roman Empire. The British tribes of Wales and the Southeast remained a problem for Rome up to and beyond 61AD. The reasons for the length of that resistance and ability of the tribes to draw that conflict out will be discussed below.

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Reference Notes, Chapter Two.

- <sup>1</sup> Tacitus. *Tacitus on Britain and Germany*. Book I, 12.
- <sup>2</sup> Caesar. Book IV, 2.
- <sup>3</sup> James. 1993, p. 75.
- <sup>4</sup> P.Grabsky. *The Great Commanders*. London, Boxtree Limited. 1993, p. 51.
- <sup>5</sup> Ellis. 1978, p. 13.
- <sup>6</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 64.
- <sup>7</sup> Ellis. 1978, p. 11.
- <sup>8</sup> Peddie. 1990, p. 9.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 1990, p. 22.
- <sup>10</sup> Ellis. 1978. p/ 9.
- <sup>11</sup> Cunliffe. 1975. p/ 64.
- <sup>12</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1. Cunliffe. 1975, p. 75. J.Wacher. *The Coming of Rome*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. 1979, p. 13.
- <sup>13</sup> Caesar. Book IV, 2.
- <sup>14</sup> N.J.E. Austin & N.B. Rankov. *Exploratio: Military and Political Intelligence in the Roman World from the Second Punic War to the Battle of Adrianople*. London, Routledge. 1995, p. 1.
- <sup>15</sup> Caesar. Book IV, 2.
- <sup>16</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> Wacher. 1979, p. 2.
- <sup>18</sup> Caesar. Book IV, 2.
- <sup>19</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> Cunliffe. 1993, p. 211 & 1975, pp. 89-90.
- <sup>21</sup> Caesar. Book IV, 2.
- <sup>22</sup> Wacher. 1979, pp. 18-19.
- <sup>23</sup> Cunliffe. 1988, p. 159.
- <sup>24</sup> Ellis. 1978, pp. 114 –115.



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- <sup>25</sup> Ellis. 1990, p. 164.
- <sup>26</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1.
- <sup>27</sup> Wacher. 1979, p. 6.
- <sup>28</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 69.
- <sup>29</sup> Ellis. 1990. p/ 151.
- <sup>30</sup> Wacher. 1979, p. 6.
- <sup>31</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1.
- <sup>32</sup> Wacher. 1978, p. 13.
- <sup>33</sup> C. Hawkes. 'New Thoughts on the Belgae.' In *Antiquity*. Volume 42. p12.
- <sup>34</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 106.
- <sup>35</sup> A.P. Fitzpatrick 'Cross-Channel Exchange, Hengistbury Head, and the End of Hillforts'. In J.Collis (Ed) *Society and Settlement in Iron Age Europe*. 2001, p. 89. C.Haselgrove 'Iron Age Britain and its European Setting'. In Collis (Ed). 2001, p. 52.
- <sup>36</sup> Jones and Mattingly. p. 58.
- <sup>37</sup> Caesar. Book III, 2. B. Cunliffe. *Greeks, Romans and Barbarians*. London, Guild Publishings. 1988, p. 123.
- <sup>38</sup> Cunliffe. 1988, p. 102.
- <sup>39</sup> Creighton. p. 8. Jones and Mattingly. p. 58.
- <sup>40</sup> Cunliffe. 1993, p. 210. Perhaps the Veneti were waiting for British support before they resisted Caesar?
- <sup>41</sup> Caesar. Book IV, 2.
- <sup>42</sup> Peddie. 1990, p. 5.
- <sup>43</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 246.
- <sup>44</sup> *ibid.* p. 247.
- <sup>45</sup> James. 1993, p. 75 & Peddie. 1987, p. 6.
- <sup>46</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1.
- <sup>47</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 36 & Cunliffe. 1975, p. 88.
- <sup>48</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 88.
- <sup>49</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 47.
- <sup>50</sup> A.A. Barret. *Gaius: The Corruption of Power*. London, B.T.Batsford Ltd. 1989, p. 126.
- <sup>51</sup> Wacher. 1978, p. 14.
- <sup>52</sup> Barret. p. 129.

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<sup>53</sup> *ibid.* pp. 125 & 129.

<sup>54</sup> B. Levick. *Claudius*. London, B.T. Batsford Ltd. 1990, p. 139.

<sup>55</sup> Barret. p. 10. Tacitus fails to mention which tribes returned the Roman soldiers. Levick implies that Cunobelin returned the soldiers promptly in 16AD. See p. 140.

<sup>56</sup> *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*. 32,1. Oxford, Oxford University Press. 1967.

<sup>57</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 68.

<sup>58</sup> Barret. p. 128.

<sup>59</sup> Suetonius. *The Twelve Caesars: IV*, 45. London, Penguin Books Ltd. 1957, p. 176.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.* IV, 46, p. 177. Suetonius is critical of Gaius as is Tacitus who described the emperor's actions as quick fancy, likely to change as quickly as a weathercock. See Tacitus. *On Britain and Germany. Agricola*, 13. There is serious debate about the possibility of Gaius' trip being more important than the classical writers portrayed. The lighthouse, he had built may have been a symbolic gesture to the British that Rome was watching them. See S.J.V. Malloch 'Gaius on the Coast' In *The Classical Quarterly* vol.51 no.2, 2001. The practical use of a lighthouse at Boulogne is obvious when by 40AD there existed a flourishing trade between Britain and Gaul and valuable custom taxes for Rome.

<sup>61</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 36.

<sup>62</sup> Peddie. 1990, p. 22.

<sup>63</sup> Wachter. 1979, p. 24.

<sup>64</sup> R.F. Evans. *Soldiers of Rome: Praetorians and Legionnaires*. Washington, Seven Locks Press. 1986, p. 82.

<sup>65</sup> Peddie. 1990, p. 40.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* p. 40.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.* p. 40.

<sup>68</sup> Wachter. 1978, p. 18.

<sup>69</sup> Peddie. 1990, p. 47.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.* p. 64.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.* p. 64.

<sup>72</sup> Mattingly and Jones. P. 51.

<sup>73</sup> See Jones & Mattingly. pp. 52-54. Cunliffe. 1975, also displays detailed coin distribution leading up to Caesars raids and on into the first half of the first century AD.

<sup>74</sup> Cunliffe. 1993, p. 211.

<sup>75</sup> C. Dio. *Dio's Roman History volume VII*. London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1961, Book LX, 20.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.* Book LX, 20.

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- <sup>77</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 122.
- <sup>78</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 55.
- <sup>79</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 126.
- <sup>80</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1.
- <sup>81</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 54.
- <sup>82</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 122.
- <sup>83</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 92.
- <sup>84</sup> Cunliffe. 1993, p. 213.
- <sup>85</sup> Cunliffe. 1993, p. 218.
- <sup>86</sup> Suetonius. X, 4. Cunliffe. 1975, pp. 98-99.
- <sup>87</sup> Cunliffe. 1993, p. 220.
- <sup>88</sup> Frere. 1987, p. 39.
- <sup>89</sup> J. Peddie. *The Roman War Machine*. Gloucestershire, Sutton Publishing Limited. 1994, p. 94. 1990, p. 103
- <sup>90</sup> S.S. Frere & J.K.S. St Joseph. *Roman Britain From the Air*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1983, p. 7.
- <sup>91</sup> Peddie. 1990, p. 144.
- <sup>92</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 120.
- <sup>93</sup> Cunliffe. 1993, p. 214.
- <sup>94</sup> Peddie. 1990, p. 146. Cunliffe. 1975, p. 120. Cunliffe. 1993, p. 216. All three covers the action at the three hill forts mentioned above.
- <sup>95</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 121.
- <sup>96</sup> A. Fox. 'Roman Exeter (Isca Dumnonorum): Origins and Early Settlement.' In J.S. Wachter (ed) *The Civitas Capitals of Roman Britain*. Leicester, Leicester University Press. 1966, p. 47. Cunliffe. 1975, p. 122.
- <sup>97</sup> Peddie. 1990, p. 155.
- <sup>98</sup> James. 1999, p. 103.

### CHAPTER III

#### CASSIVELLAUNUS AND THE RESPONSE TO CAESAR'S INVASION OF 54BC.

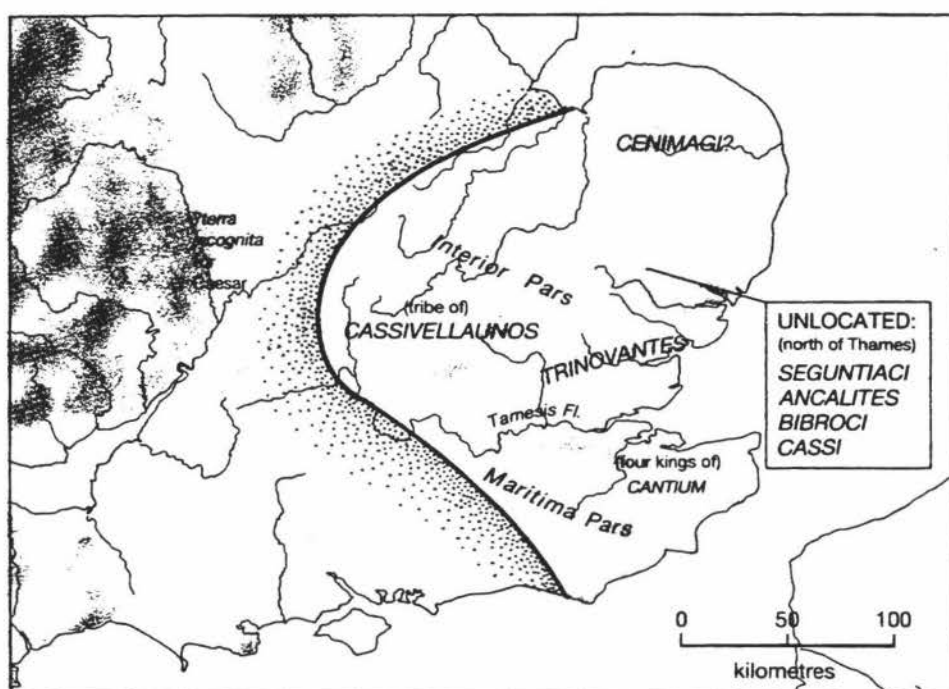
*'His territory lies about 80 miles from the sea and is separated from the maritime tribes by the river called the Thames. Previously Cassivellaunus had been in a continual state of war with the other tribes, but our arrival had frightened the Britons into appointing him commander-in-chief for the campaign.'* Caesar.<sup>1</sup>

In writing about the chieftain Cassivellaunus (Latinised form of Caswallawn<sup>2</sup>) Caesar named him as the over-all commander of the British tribal army that faced him in his second trip across the Channel in 54BC. Cassivellaunus has retained the honour of being the first Briton to be named in the classical sources. This chapter will look at how Cassivellaunus responded to Caesar in 54BC with a detailed analysis of his style of warfare, highlighting his ability as a military leader and how effective he was against the Romans and the consequences of his actions.

Who was Cassivellaunus? Caesar described him as the appointed chief of the tribal resistance that he faced as he moved towards the Thames.<sup>3</sup> His land lay seventy-five miles inland from the coast and was separated from the Cantiaci by the Thames. Caesar states that Cassivellaunus held some form of control over the people who lived northwest of the Thames. This was clearly seen by the tribal army that met with Caesar as he moved west, including forces assembled 'from all parts of the country.'<sup>4</sup>

Caesar named five tribes, the Cenimagni, Segontiaci, Ancalites, Bibroci and the Cassi, who may have represented tribal units that occupied lands between the Trinovante and Cassivellaunus who went on to form the tribal confederation of the Catuvellauni after 54BC. Other than the Cenimagni

(possibly Iceni) none are mentioned again by classical sources after 54BC.<sup>5</sup> Caesar's accounts of the conflict between Cassivellaunus and the Trinovante north of the Thames may have been a description of the process of tribal formation.



Map 5. The tribal situation at the time of Julius Caesar. (From Jones and Mattingly 1990 p 44).

The pan-tribal nature of the force assembled to meet Caesar in 54BC showed the capacity for the people of Iron Age Britain to form temporary military arrangements at a time of crisis and Caesar stated this, despite his claim that the interior of Britain was in a continual state of war.<sup>6</sup>

That the tribes facing Caesar had appointed Cassivellaunus leader shows he had a degree of prestige and

authority, but his role in the political framework of tribal Iron Age Britain is not so clear. His success and ability as a tactical leader will be looked at below, but his reputation as a warrior could explain his choice as leader of the tribal army. Cassivellaunus was definitely an aggressive warrior, either a chief or simply a “robber baron” carving out a kingdom at the time of Caesar’s invasion.<sup>7</sup>

Leading up to the defence of the western bank of the Thames where Cassivellaunus made a stand, the Romans had moved inland in 54BC, fighting their way through the Cantiaci of Kent. The Britons (mainly the Cantiaci) had only skirmished with the Romans and defended a river crossing (possibly the Stour) with cavalry and chariot, avoiding direct battle with the Roman army.<sup>8</sup> They had, as Caesar wrote, chosen against contesting the Roman landing on the coast as in 55BC fearing the size of the Roman fleet and withdrawn inland.<sup>9</sup> They eventually made a stand at the fort of Bigbury Woods.<sup>10</sup>

At Bigbury, Caesar describes the Britons working in small detachments attacking the Romans in an attempt to spoil moves against the fortified forest encampment.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately Caesar fails to clarify whether these groups were infantry or other; the wooded location would prove hazardous to cavalry or chariot units unless there were adequate track ways. The actions of the defenders proved futile and the men of the VIIth Legion eventually took the fort at Bigbury by storm.<sup>12</sup>

After taking the British fortification, Caesar followed the enemy force only to be called back to the coast where a storm had seriously damaged the Roman fleet. Caesar then implemented measures to secure and repair the fleet and headed back inland to where his forces waited. During this time the Britons had appointed Cassivellaunus commander of a large confederated tribal army.<sup>13</sup>

In the Romans march to the Thames, Caesar described the tactics used by Cassivellaunus and his forces. Utilising the combined screens of cavalry and chariot, the Britons executed a fighting withdrawal. They clashed with the Roman cavalry and then withdrew, drawing the cavalry into wooded areas or hills where the Britons inflicted further casualties, while losing warriors themselves.<sup>14</sup>

Cassivellaunus' forces shied away from direct battle with the Romans (like the Cantiaci), preferring small indirect actions. This type of fighting was used to entice the Roman army into forests and marshes in an attempt to wear them down. Despite Cassivellaunus' absence in the tribal army that opposed Caesar in 55BC, he was possibly aware of the actions of the year before. Cassivellaunus may have adopted this indirect style of warfare to combat the Roman army, thus minimising Roman strength at close quarter fighting.

Cassivellaunus also had in his company a guest who would have had knowledge of Roman military procedures and tactics. Commius, of the Gallic Atrebates, had come over to Britain preceding Caesar in 55BC but had remained there when the Romans withdrew. He then appeared again in 54BC in the retinue of Cassivellaunus, who was leading the tribal warriors against Rome.

The lessons of 55BC and the advice Commius may have offered from his experiences in Gaul could have determined the measures taken by Cassivellaunus in avoiding a pitched battle. Iron Age tribal armies rarely won against the professionally trained Roman army. The indirect tactics used by the Britons may have come from experience while also suiting their natural fighting style that involved inter-tribal hit and run raiding and skirmishing.<sup>15</sup>

The Britons, under Cassivellaunus' direction, hampered the advancing Roman infantry, sweeping out from wooded areas to attack at times of opportunity before withdrawing.

This caused confusion amongst the Roman soldiers who were unfamiliar with this style of warfare. Caesar described the unfamiliar tactics used by the Britons; fighting in scattered groups, dismounting from their chariots to fight on foot with concentrated numbers to gain the advantage. Caesar also wrote of the placement of reserves and the injection of fresh troops relieving tired units.<sup>16</sup>

These actions described a well-executed tactical procedure as opposed to the actions of a disorganised and disheartened tribal army in retreat. The indirect style of action would have been difficult to coordinate and execute in ancient times and suggests strong leadership and sound tactical ability. This style of indirect warfare would be used by Caratacus in Wales a century later and shows a continuation of tactics that remained unchanged in response to Roman invasion.

The use of the chariot in Britain was well attested in Caesar's accounts of his raids to Britain and created an unexpected problem for the Roman soldiers. The chariot played a prominent part in the tribal response to Caesar and Cassivellaunus is said to have had as many as four thousand chariots fighting Caesar, and even demobilized his infantry after the failed defence of the Thames in favour of his more mobile chariots.<sup>17</sup>

A more conservative figure of seven or eight hundred chariots has been given, but the cost alone in vehicle and horses must have limited the numbers deployed, while presenting an impressive outlay for the British nobles who would have supplied these fighting chariots.<sup>18</sup>

Caesar's claim of four thousand chariots may be an exaggeration to enhance his alleged victory in Britain and seven hundred may be a more realistic figure. The predominant use of cavalry and chariot after the Thames



however, shows a continuation of hit-and-run tactics and the movement of these forces needs addressing.

The nature of the forests in Britain during the late Iron Age has been alluded to in the first chapter but needs revisiting here with regards to the deployment of cavalry and chariot forces. The forests of Britain were not the finely lined and manicured forests we see today, but thick wooded areas that dominated areas of the landscape not yet cleared. This would have created serious problems for the deployment of cavalry or chariots and any movement of these kinds of troops would have required a well-known and established network of road and track ways.

It wasn't until after the invasion in 43AD that the Romans built their roads and it's obvious that they would have utilised existing track ways to move inland. The thick forests would have seriously hampered the shadowing of the Roman army by the tribal warriors unless there was the possibility of a parallel track way to the one the Romans were using. These track ways would have also helped to conceal the tribal war bands.<sup>19</sup>

Linking the major track ways would have been smaller local roads at regular intervals that would have made it possible for the forces of Cassivellaunus to harass the advancing Roman army.<sup>20</sup> Caesar's accounts of effective chariot attacks suggest track ways and he also wrote of seeing dust clouds created by the tribal army on the move in 55BC.<sup>21</sup> Cavalry and chariots as well as infantry and the movement of stock may have been responsible for such a disturbance.

The discovery in 1985 of a planked track way through bog land in Ireland revealed an Iron Age roadway that had similarities to track ways across central Europe. The Corlea track way is important in showing an example of Iron Age construction and the capability to build such a track. Irish

law texts have also provided laws governing their building and maintenance.<sup>22</sup>

The planked type track way of Corlea were also being used in the marshlands of Britain at the time of Caesar, as they were in Gaul,<sup>23</sup> and archaeological evidence confirm that planked roadways existed, with an example found in the Somerset Levels.<sup>24</sup> The existence of planked track ways in Britain means that the movement of tribal forces (infantry, cavalry and chariots), recorded by Caesar, in and around the marshlands of the Thames region was a possibility.

Cassivellaunus' knowledge of the various pathways would have enhanced his ability to effectively move or hide his people, cattle and supplies while sending his warriors to harass the Romans.<sup>25</sup> These actions of Cassivellaunus and his army had two functions; the first to deny the Romans forage and food and the second to frustrate and attack any Roman force isolated from the main group. This would have kept the Roman troops on a high state of alert and been both physically and emotionally taxing.

Again these tactics were not those of a disorganised tribal army but showed strong central leadership and a clear understanding of the actions required to combat the invading Roman army. The chariot and the ability to deploy it against the Roman army suited the tribal way of war and may possibly be traced to the inter-tribal style of warfare that was of an older tradition. While the chariot troubled the Romans at first it failed to ultimately stop Caesar's advance.

Cassivellaunus' tactical decision to hold the western bank of the Thames against the Roman advance shows a continuation of tactics used by the Cantiaci in 55BC as the invaders moved through Kent. The holding of the western bank of rivers was a tactic that appeared to be part of British tribal defence against the Romans in 55 and 54BC as well as 43AD.

Like the actions of the Cantiaci at the river Stour, Cassivellaunus put faith in his armies' ability to defend the opposite side of a riverbank against the Romans. He chose the Thames. Caesar gathered intelligence from British deserters and discovered that Cassivellaunus had driven stakes (above and below water) into the western riverbank to afford greater protection for his warriors.<sup>26</sup>

The use of the stakes to fortify the western bank of the Thames would have required planning from Cassivellaunus and an authority to mobilise the work force to build these defences. Despite the Romans eventual success in crossing, the Thames points to a place where the British leader may have drawn a defensive 'line in the sand' in an attempt by Cassivellaunus to stop the Romans entering his own territory.

The Thames defensive line was compromised either at Brentford or Tilbury,<sup>27</sup> and Caesar writes that his cavalry made the crossing, giving cover to his infantry. The legionaries waded across the river up to their necks in water, then formed up to combine with the cavalry and defeated the tribal army.<sup>28</sup>

A closer look at Caesar's accounts of this engagement does not appear to make sense with regard to the British defence. What were Cassivellaunus and his warriors doing as the Romans crossed the Thames? Were they simply watching and waiting for the Romans to form up? This is doubtful, unless Cassivellaunus and his warriors trusted and relied on the stakes for their defence.

Caesar had written that Cassivellaunus' land of origin lay west of the Thames and this river can be seen as an obvious natural geographical boundary where the tribal forces, following actions of armed opposition so far, may have chosen to resist the Roman crossing and this should have been fiercely contested. What could have prevented the full

concentration of Cassivellaunus' energies in this river defence? The possibility of a Trinovantian led flank attack?

It was at the defence of the Thames that the tribal differences within the confederation played a decisive role in the breaking up of the resistance to Rome and may give a clue to explain Caesar's drive to cross the Thames. Peddie believes that Caesar was moving westward in an attempt to cross the Thames and meet up with pro-Roman leaders of the Trinovantes who lived to the north of the Thames.<sup>29</sup>

Ignorance of the Channel, the Thames inlet and the tidal patterns would have ruled out landing directly in Trinovante territory. The Roman army was a land based fighting force and although they possessed a navy, it may not have had the skill or capability to land in Trinovante territory. The closest landfall in Trinovante territory from Boulogne was four times the distance of that between Boulogne and Kent. Having the aggressive and hostile tribal confederation of the Cantiaci at their back potentially threatening supply lines would also have been strategically unwise and thus landing in Kent would have provided a safer option.

The assumption that Caesar was moving inland to meet elements of the Trinovante highlights the tribal nature of Iron Age politics discussed above. The Trinovante, for their part, were justifiably more concerned with their tribal identity and survival, and were simply moving to embrace a new military force in Britain.

Joining delegates from the Trinovante were representatives from the Cenimagni (possibly the Icenii), Segantiaci, Aulacites, Bibroci and Cassi.<sup>30</sup> Their appearance so soon after the failure of Cassivellaunus to hold the western side of the Thames seems coincidental.

It has been suggested that these tribes (excluding the Cenimagni) occupied the lands between the Trinovantes and Cassivellaunus. Their moves to submit to Caesar may have

risen out of a desire, like the Trinovantes, to maintain tribal identity in the face of pressure from an aggressive Cassivellaunus. Caesar may indeed have been listing tribal factions within the British confederation that had chosen Cassivellaunus as its leader, while also registering smaller tribal groupings that lived north of the Thames.<sup>31</sup>

Caesar states that Cassivellaunus had become leader of the British tribes who had been in a continual state of war. The tribes who now sought terms with Caesar may have seen the tide of tribal politics and power changing and, like the Trinovantes, moved to fall in behind the new power in Britain.

Caesar claims he gained intelligence of the defences on and in the Thames from deserters and prisoners of war.<sup>32</sup> Did the Trinovante also supply Caesar with intelligence for an alternative undefended crossing point of the Thames? The Trinovantes were quick to ally themselves to the Romans and in so doing secure their tribal interests against a traditional enemy, Cassivellaunus. Their knowledge of the Thames would have been as good as that of Cassivellaunus. Another dimension to the Trinovante issue was the exiled Mandubracius (see Chapter Two) who Caesar had brought with him, and who was then established as leader of the Trinovantes.

The submission of the Trinovantes and other tribal groups to the Romans should not be seen as an act of betrayal, but the realities of British Iron Age politics where tribes manoeuvred to ensure their survival during a period of flux. There was no higher loyalty than to the tribe and this would have determined tribal decision-making.

With the departure of the Trinovantes from the tribal resistance to the Roman invasion and the fording of the Thames, Cassivellaunus would have been hard pressed to defend the northern bank. He could possibly have found his

army's flanks threatened by a hostile Trinovantian force that may well have been supported by a large contingent of Roman and auxiliary cavalry. This is only a speculative possibility that has not been proven by archaeological evidence or classical sources.

Throughout his accounts, Caesar described how difficult the Romans found the British cavalry and chariots to deal with, and one can only imagine how the contesting of the Thames river crossing unfolded. Did the British warriors leave their chariots and horses in the rear (to be mobilized for any possible retreat) and contest the crossing on foot? This will, unfortunately, never be known and it is a shame that such a pivotal action in Caesar's advance into Britain only received a few lines in his commentary.<sup>33</sup>

Cassivellaunus' position at the Thames must have been seriously compromised forcing him to withdraw and break up his forces, disbanding his infantry while concentrating his chariots in the tactics used prior to the failed Thames defence, a fighting withdrawal and harassment. West of the Thames Cassivellaunus also employed a policy of scorched earth to further hamper the Roman advance that now had dangerously exposed lines of communications and supply.

The British leader again exerted considerable power and moral courage by moving stock and people westward, while moving or burning crops in the face of the Roman advance. This denied Caesar the forage and foodstuffs needed to sustain his forces and certain disaster was only avoided by the support and supplies of grain from his new allies the Trinovantes.<sup>34</sup>

Despite Caesar's account that the Roman advance proved a difficult action full of "great danger" and "fear" he was successful in finding Cassivellaunus' base of operations and attacked it, capturing the stronghold (possibly at Wheathampstead).<sup>35</sup> Caesar had gained the location of this

base from intelligence obtained from local tribes that had submitted to Rome.<sup>36</sup>

The westward extent of Caesar's advance (75 miles) was the same distance as the reported border of the land under Cassivellaunus' control.<sup>37</sup> After capturing the stronghold of Cassivellaunus, Caesar received word of new developments back on the coast where his fleet was being repaired. Cassivellaunus, it appears, had not finished in his attempt to resist the Roman invasion.

Prior to the Roman assault on his stronghold, Cassivellaunus had sent out requests (or orders) for the four Cantiaci chiefs (Cingetorix, Carvilius, Taximagulus and Segovax) to press the Roman force that was repairing its fleet in their tribal territory.<sup>38</sup> This development suggests some form of pan-tribal authority Cassivellaunus had (however limited) and the acknowledgement of that authority by the tribal factions of the Cantiaci. Despite their actions against the coastal forces, the Cantiaci were unsuccessful in a costly assault and withdrew,<sup>39</sup> however it highlighted the potential of pan-tribal alliances in times of stress. The Trinovante and the Cantiaci represent two faces on the same coin of tribal confederations of convenience, and their response to Roman invasion under a pan-tribal leader.

This loose form of tribal confederation appears to have been a standard reaction taken by the tribal groupings within Britain to Roman invasion and would be seen in 43AD where the tribes of southeastern Britain dropped tribal conflict to unite against the Romans. Boudicca also gained leadership over several tribal groupings in response to Roman aggression.

With the loss of his stronghold and the failure of the Cantiaci to destroy the Roman fleet, Cassivellaunus and Caesar sought terms. Caesar states that after speaking to



Cassivellaunus, through Commius, he gained the promise of hostages and Cassivellaunus' word that he would not harm the Trinovante. He then departed for the continent.<sup>40</sup> However several questions rise over this series of events.

Caesar's commentary seems to conveniently brush over the serious situation that had developed in Britain. Caesar had stretched his supply lines and, while taking Cassivellaunus' stronghold, failed to capture the British warlord or convincingly destroy all tribal resistance west of the Thames. He clearly stated as one of his reasons for deciding to winter on the continent the Britons ability to 'easily avoid any decisive action'.<sup>41</sup>

Cassivellaunus' stronghold at Wheathampstead (quite possibly only one of many) was reportedly the western limit to Caesar's area of operations. This points to the possibility that even if he wanted to, Caesar could not have done more than he had against Cassivellaunus and to try would be courting disaster.

Cassivellaunus was still in the field and his negotiations may have been an attempt to reorganise his forces after the setbacks of losing men and resources leading up to, and on, the Thames and at Wheathampstead, and on hearing of the failed actions in Kent. If Caesar is to be believed, both Gallic and British tribal leaders often reneged on deals made when the situation warranted it and this was seen in Britain during Caesar's campaign of 55BC.<sup>42</sup>

It is uncertain what became of Cassivellaunus after Caesar's withdrawal but he managed to keep out of the grasp of Caesar who, history shows, was not gracious to his defeated opponents. The Veneti of Armorican Gaul were wiped out as a tribal entity when Caesar defeated them in 56BC and Vercingetorix was chained and imprisoned in Rome after his defeat at Alesia in 52BC, only to be publicly executed on Caesar's return to Rome in 46BC.<sup>43</sup>



The failings of Cassivellaunus in his conducting of campaigns against the Romans can be seen in the way the initial fighting was handled. Why was the Roman landing in 54BC un-opposed? This action itself seems strange and strategically unsound when it was reported by Caesar that Cassivellaunus had ordered the attack of the Cantiaci against the Roman fleet near the end of the campaign in 54BC, showing some form of tactical authority over them. Why not resist on the coast?

It has been noted that Cassivellaunus was absent in the tribal opposition in 55BC and only entered the fight the next year after the Romans had gained a beachhead on the coast and moved westward towards the territory he controlled. Cassivellaunus and the tribal warriors under his command could well have been building up the supplies required to effectively compete with the Roman invasion and therefore lacked the capability to help in contesting a full-scale landing. Cassivellaunus may have also already decided on the tactic of drawing the Romans inland and therefore chose not to contest the landing.

The Cantiaci perhaps accepted that they alone could not effectively prevent the Roman landing and withdrew inland. They may also have still been suffering from the previous season's fighting and could only contest the Romans in a series of hit-and-run engagements. These factors are only speculative possibilities, but may help to explain events in 54BC.

There were several similarities in the series of events that unfolded in 54BC. The Cantiaci harassed the Romans prior to the holding of the Stour River. The tribal war bands then withdrew into the security of the fortification at Bigbury, where they were defeated. Cassivellaunus followed similar tactics to those of the Cantiaci. His forces fought the Romans indirectly before they defended the western bank of

the Thames. Once the Thames defensive line had been crossed, Cassivellaunus withdrew westward, harassing the Romans before gathering within the fortifications of Wheathampstead. Once defeated there, terms were agreed upon and Caesar left for Gaul.

Whether flawed planning or strategic necessity on the part of Cassivellaunus, the Roman army moved inland from the Kentish coast skirmishing with the Cantiaci before experiencing fierce opposition from the tribal army led by Cassivellaunus. There is a distinct pattern to the response by the Cantiaci and Cassivellaunus to the Roman invasion.

The Romans would not cross the Channel with an invasion force again until 43AD and the British tribes carried on the jostling for power that characterised the state of flux at the time of Caesar. His invasions of 55 and 54BC bought the people of Britain into contact with the Roman world but what affect did these two campaigns have on the Iron Age people of Britain?

It is uncertain what impact Caesar's raids had on the power of Cassivellaunus, but his aggression against the Trinovantes may have stopped. Despite this, other tribes such as the Catuvellauni emerged as a military threat out of the tribal lands northwest of the Thames. The Trinovantes gained some form of protection from the promise Caesar received from Cassivellaunus, but as discussed above, they lost all tribal autonomy being incorporated into the Catuvellauni sphere of influence by 10AD.

There are no figures available for the casualties inflicted on the British tribal population during 55-54BC, but the presence of the Roman army, the mobilisation of tribal warriors and the need to supply them must have impacted on food resources in the area. Archaeological evidence in Kent dating from the time of Caesar's invasion point to a lack of wealth more linked to the decentralised nature of the

Cantiaci than the fighting that took place there. This decentralisation would have hampered any move to stabilise trade and gain wealth. The lack of evidence in Roman and continental trade goods supports this.<sup>44</sup>

From a military standpoint, the campaigns of 55 and 54BC exposed the people of Iron Age Britain to the sheer military strength and potential of the Roman war machine. The actions of Cassivellaunus and the warriors under his command, even by Caesar's own account, put up serious resistance to the legions who crossed the Channel, soldiers who had gained much experience against the tribal armies of Gaul.

Caesar's commentary also highlighted the indirect style of warfare that reflected the Britons approach to inter-tribal warfare. Cassivellaunus seems to have executed hit and run tactics against the Romans as they moved further westward and away from their base on the coast. This also stretched out the Roman supply lines, while forcing Caesar's troops to gain food and forage from the land. Cassivellaunus' actions suggest that he was actively avoiding a head on fight with Roman soldiers.

This time of stress motivated the tribes of Britain to unite against Roman invasion. However these types of arrangements only lasted for limited periods due to the instability of tribal politics. Caesar's invasions did have an impact on the face of inter-tribal politics and Rome became a destination for British tribal chiefs who found themselves on the losing side of tribal leadership contests or inter-tribal conflict.

The Trinovante were the first to approach Caesar, and therefore Rome, setting a precedent. The actions of the Trinovante point to the problems facing any tribal leader who sought to lead a tribal confederation against any Roman invasion. The Claudian invasion would change the face of

Iron Age Britain and brought that area into the influence and control of the Roman Empire.

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Reference Notes, Chapter Three.

- <sup>1</sup> Wiseman & Wiseman. p. 92.
- <sup>2</sup> N, Davies. p. 59.
- <sup>3</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1.
- <sup>4</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> Branigan. p. 4.
- <sup>6</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1. Cunliffe also hold the view that the Britons dropped tribal animosities temporarily to resist Caesar. 1975, p. 64.
- <sup>7</sup> James. 1999, p. 97.
- <sup>8</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1.
- <sup>9</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1.
- <sup>10</sup> Peddie. 1990, p. 10.
- <sup>11</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1.
- <sup>12</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> Peddie. 1990, pp. 11-12.
- <sup>14</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1.
- <sup>15</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 65.
- <sup>16</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1.
- <sup>17</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> Dodge. p. 186.
- <sup>19</sup> Karl, R. ...on a road to nowhere...? *Chariotry and the Road systems in the Celtic World*. <http://homepage.tinet.ie/~archaeology/road.htm>. 2001.
- <sup>20</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> Caesar. Book IV, 2.
- <sup>22</sup> B. Raftery. *Pagan Celtic Ireland*. London, Thames and Hudson Ltd. 1994, p. 98. Karl. 2001.
- <sup>23</sup> Caesar. Book VII, 2.
- <sup>24</sup> Dark & Dark. p. 39.
- <sup>25</sup> Dodge. p. 186.
- <sup>26</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1. Austin & Rankov. p. 68.
- <sup>27</sup> Jones & Mattingly. p. 64.

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- <sup>28</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1.
- <sup>29</sup> Peddie. 1990, p. 12.
- <sup>30</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 64.
- <sup>31</sup> Branigan. p. 4.
- <sup>32</sup> Austin & Rankov. p. 23.
- <sup>33</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1.
- <sup>34</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>35</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1. See Peddie. 1990, p. 13 for possible location of Cassivellaunus' stronghold.
- <sup>36</sup> Austin & Rankov. p. 23.
- <sup>37</sup> Peddie. 1990, p. 177.
- <sup>38</sup> Caesar. Book V, 1.
- <sup>39</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>40</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>41</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> Caesar. Book IV, 2.
- <sup>43</sup> Ellis. 1990, p. 174.
- <sup>44</sup> Webster. 1980, p. 72.

CHAPTER IV  
CARATACUS, TOGODUMNUS AND THE WAR IN  
THE WEST.

*'And even when they did assemble, they would not come to close quarters with the Roman, but took refuge in the swamps and the forests, hoping to wear out the invaders in fruitless effort, so that, just as in the days of Julius Caesar, they should sail back with nothing accomplished.'* Dio.<sup>1</sup>

Between 54BC and 43AD the southeastern tribal territories of Britain went through a period of political stabilisation and powerful core trade zones, based on cross-Channel trade, developed. The tribes that dominated these core zones controlled the imported trade goods (such as Italian wine, tableware, bronze jugs and patellae) that came into Britain from the continental areas of the Roman Empire, while also moving the exported raw materials (such as corn, gold, silver, cattle, slaves, hides and hunting dogs) that came out of the interior periphery zones and beyond.<sup>2</sup>

After Caesar withdrew from Britain in 54BC, the Trinovantes once again felt pressure from the tribal groupings west of their territory. Cassivellaunus seems to have disappeared from history after his fight with Caesar but a strong tribal grouping began pushing out from the lands he had once controlled.

One of the strongest tribal groupings that grew within the period between the raids of Caesar and the full-scale invasion under Claudius was the Catuvellauni. This tribe, which formed from people northwest of the Thames, were of non-Belgic or earlier origin.<sup>3</sup> Like other tribal groupings that the Romans clearly described at the time of the Claudian invasion, such as the Cantiaci, the Iceni, Coritani and Durotriges, the Catuvellauni appear to have been a

confederation of smaller tribal groups that moved towards statehood after Caesar.<sup>4</sup>

By 43AD, the Catuvellauni were a tribal power that successfully and aggressively incorporated the tribal lands of the Trinovantes, the northwestern Cantiaci and areas of the northern Atrebates and the eastern Dobunni. The process of Catuvellauni expansion started under the leadership of Tasciovanus who started issuing coins from around 20BC from Verulamium.<sup>5</sup>

It was under Tasciovanus that the Catuvellauni began to put pressure on their eastern neighbours, and commenced the process of successful expansion. Archaeological findings show that Roman trade goods were present in the lands that became the territory of the Catuvellauni from the time of Caesar's withdrawal. These trade items also correspond with the distribution area of coinage attributed to Tasciovanus.<sup>6</sup>

By the first decade of the first century AD, the Catuvellauni were pushing into the lands of the Trinovantes. This process of Catuvellauni expansion may have been a gradual process with events on the continent influencing the actions of Tasciovanus. In 16BC the Roman legate, Marcus Lollius, was defeated in Germany, prompting Augustus to travel to Gaul to stabilise the frontier.<sup>7</sup> This may have influenced Tasciovanus decision to first move on the Trinovante capital of Camulodunum and then withdraw as Augustus entered Gaul following the defeat. Coinage issued by Tasciovanus from the Trinovante capital was only for a short period of time.<sup>8</sup>

By 7AD, Tasciovanus' seat of power was Verulamium and Cunobelin, his son by blood or adoption, ruled from Camulodunum where he minted coins. There is uncertainty of Cunobelin's lineage and it is unclear whether he was a blood son of Tasciovanus or son by adoption.<sup>9</sup> The arrangement of adoption may have been the fosterage



relationship discussed in the first chapter and a standard practice.

Despite the question mark over his lineage, Cunobelin had joined the two tribal territories of the Catuvellauni and the Trinovante by 10AD (a date that corresponds with the defeat of Varus on the Rhine frontier in 9AD), minting coins from Verulamium and Camulodunum, possibly on the death of Tasciovanus.<sup>10</sup>

The domination of Camulodunum gave Cunobelin control over the movement of trade goods into and out of Britain. From this base, Cunobelin pushed into Kent in 20AD and exercised some form of authority over the eastern Dobunni. His brother Eboracius meanwhile exerted power over the northern Atrebates gaining control of Calleva (Silchester) at about the same time.<sup>11</sup>

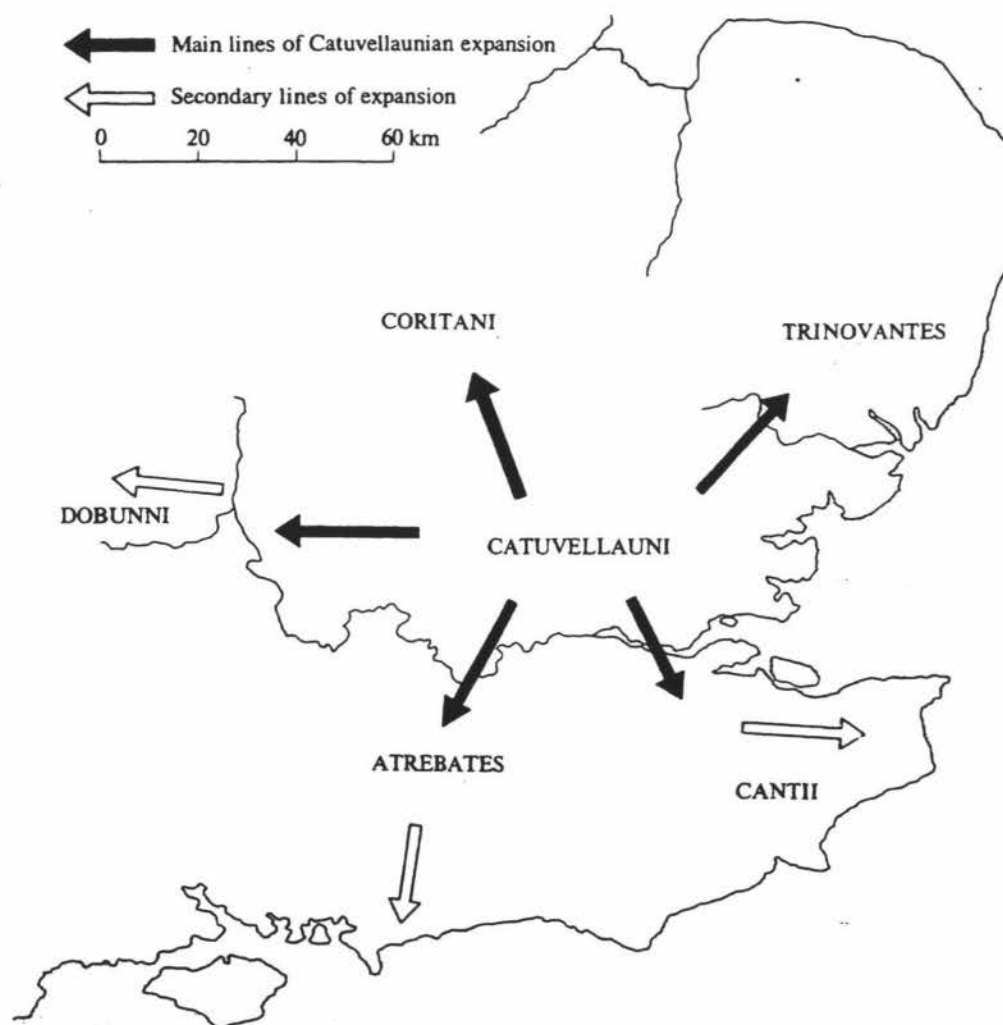
It was under the rule of Cunobelin that the Catuvellauni rose as the most powerful tribe in southeastern Britain, incorporating many of the neighbouring lands in the process. Opposition to this expansion came, however, from the Atrebates who lived to the south.

Cunobelin's power and wealth can be traced archaeologically through the number of coins attributed to him. Cunliffe states that this Iron Age chieftain issued up to one million coins that were widely spread across the lands of the Catuvellauni, Trinovante and other tribal areas that bordered Cunobelin's territory.<sup>12</sup> The means by which Cunobelin gained the precious metals for the minting of coinage suggest both the domination of trade in precious metals from the west and also the possibility of a Roman subsidy.<sup>13</sup>

The wealth Cunobelin built up between 10-40AD reflected strong trade links with Romanised Gaul and the Mediterranean world. This climate of increased cross-Channel trade that enabled Cunobelin to gain trade with

Rome and possible a subsidy to maintain friendship with the Romans.<sup>14</sup>

The mountain region bordering the lands of Silures and the most westerly of the Welsh tribes the Demetae was the only region that produced gold in southern Britain.<sup>15</sup> Cunobelin may have had strong trade links with these Welsh tribes enabling him to secure the precious metals used in minting numerous coins. This Welsh connection may have also have set up diplomatic foundations for Caratacus when he moved west after 43AD.



Map 6. The expansion of the Catuvellauni. (From J. Wachter. *The Coming of Rome*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. 1979 p 23).

The rise of the Catuvellauni was a dynastic one. Cunobelin succeeded Tasciovanus in 10AD. Cunobelin was, in turn succeeded by his two sons Caratacus and Togodumnus around 40AD. A third son, Adminius appears to have also been involved in the power sharing of the Catuvellauni, ruling in Kent. He was however, expelled by his father and turned up at the court of Gaius prior to Cunobelin's death.<sup>16</sup>

Leading up to and during the reign of Cunobelin, the Catuvellauni encouraged a warm relationship with Rome while maintaining an expansionist policy in southeast Britain. This would have been a balancing act that required expansion without upsetting Rome. Any move against the Atrebates, who also held a friendship with Rome, would have risked the possibility of a response from Rome.

The control of a strong Catuvellaunian power-base as already stated, was passed on to Caratacus and Togodumnus who lost it all when the Romans invaded Britain in the name of the Emperor Claudius, under the command of Aulus Plautius in 43AD. The reasons Claudius undertook the invasion of Britain have been discussed earlier, but the actions of Caratacus and Togodumnus on the death or infirmity of Cunobelin hint at failed diplomacy (see below) and their inability to fully appreciate the expansionist nature of Rome or Claudius' desire for a military success.

Cunobelin had been able to expand his own power and that of the Catuvellauni while not offending Rome. However his sons did not seem to have been able to sustain the balance created by their father and events leading up to the invasion suggest that maybe these Catuvellauni princes over-estimated their position and were over confident in the belief that they could make demands on Rome and the Emperor.

The event in question centred on Rome's refusal to return the British exiles demanded by Chiefs across the Channel. Suetonius wrote that 'the Britons were now threatening vengeance because the senate refused to return certain deserters'.<sup>17</sup>

These threats and demands during the reign of Claudius imply a confidence from across the Channel and some form of diplomatic contact with Rome. That it was Caratacus and Togodumnus who led the response to the Roman invasion suggests that they may have been "the Britons" Suetonius claimed made demands for the return of British exiles in Rome.

Looking at the political map of southeast Britain also suggests that the Catuvellauni were most likely to have made such demands. The Iceni to the northeast were on good terms with Rome as were the Atrebates to the south. The Iceni at least had no interest in the return of these exiles. The tribes of Kent and the Trinovante were under Catuvellauni control and therefore lacking in diplomatic means to make any demands.

The ability to make these kinds of demands would have required a large degree of confidence, obvious in the Catuvellauni. It was also in the political interests of the Catuvellauni to have these chiefs (Adminius and Verica) returned to them, as it must have been a concern to know that these British exiles were courting Roman support for their own reinstatement in Britain.<sup>18</sup>

One of the exiled British chiefs was Caratacus and Togodumnus' brother Adminius who had been expelled from Britain in 39AD.<sup>19</sup> Adminius was to play a part in the events that unfolded in 43AD, which impacted on the tribal army's ability to resist the Roman invasion. He came back to Britain in the ranks of the Roman army and would have been

invaluable to Aulus Plautius with his local knowledge and intelligence.<sup>20</sup>

The demands for the return of the British exiles may have come from a belief Caratacus and Togodumnus had that they were in a position of power in southeast Britain to resist any Roman moves to invade. They may also have trusted the Channel as a natural barrier to a Roman invasion. The memory of Cassivellaunus and his fight with Caesar may also have given rise to Catuvellauni confidence in fighting the Romans.

Another plausible reason for the antagonistic nature of the Catuvellaunian diplomacy may also have come from a belief Caratacus and Togodumnus had that a Roman invasion was inevitable and that they had no alternative other than to resist, or submit, and lose all. Once the negotiations began, it perhaps became a matter of pride that meant Caratacus and Togodumnus could not back down without losing face and prestige within their tribal structure.

Hindsight shows that all was lost eventually, but the decision to resist was taken anyway duplicating the decision made by Cassivellaunus in 54BC. Caratacus' and Togodumnus' choice to resist changed their politics to an anti-Roman attitude representing a major policy shift away from the stand taken by their father.

How Cunobelin would have dealt with the potential of a Roman invasion is uncertain, but the reality of this threat was a test to the early leadership of his two sons. The vengeance threatened and the cooling in diplomatic dealings encouraged Claudius to do as Caesar had done, and cross the Channel and invade Britain.

Unlike 55BC, where the tribes of Kent contested Caesar's invasion, the landing of 43AD was unopposed. The reason for the failure to attack the Roman force when it was most vulnerable, on landing, is unknown. It appears that Britain

and the Channel were still a mystery to the Roman soldiers who had been deployed to take part in the invasion.<sup>21</sup> A mutiny by the Roman army on the coast of Gaul has been highlighted as an event that may have had an influence on the Briton's tactics.

News of the mutiny reached the tribal army in Britain and it was decided that it would withdraw inland. The mutiny may have been enough to make the British think that the Romans would not come.<sup>22</sup> The actions of Cassivellaunus against Caesar in 54BC and the failed attempt of Gaius to cross only a few years previous may well have given the Britons a belief that the Romans would or could not cross the channel.

The part-time nature and size of the tribal armies may have also created problems in maintaining a force in the field for long periods of time. The policy of not contesting the Roman invasion on the beaches, however, may well have been a deliberate move to draw the Romans inland, a tactic used by Cassivellaunus in 54BC. Whatever the reasons, the Roman landing was unopposed by British warriors.

After landing and securing a beachhead, the Romans skirmished their way westward. Dio gives accounts of what the Romans found when they moved inland. The Britons refused to meet in the field 'and even when they did assemble, they would not come to close quarters with the Romans, but took refuge in the swamps and the forests, hoping to wear out the invaders in fruitless effort'.<sup>23</sup>

The tactical use of marshes and forests echoed the tactics used against Caesar in 55 and 54BC, and like those who opposed Caesar in the first century BC, the forces of Caratacus and Togodumnus fought from chariots. This fighting style was a continuation of tactics used in 55 and 54BC of harassing the advancing Roman army.

Dio's narrative states that after following, finding and skirmishing with the British forces Plautius defeated first Caratacus and then Togodumnus.<sup>24</sup> These engagements however, may represent delaying tactics as the British forces reassembled and joined to face the Romans in a united front.<sup>25</sup>

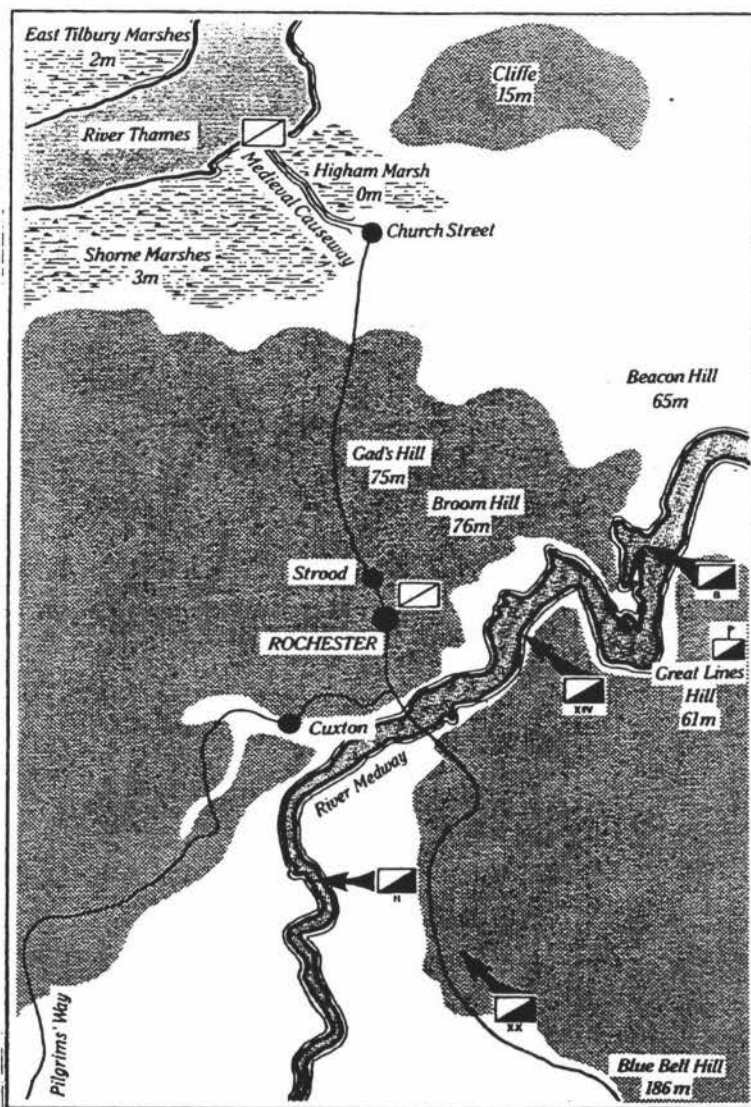
The natural environment (marshes and forests as described above) would have been an important factor in executing an effective harassing style of warfare and the defeats Dio wrote of may have been the result of Caratacus and Togodumnus testing the Roman military machine against their own strengths and capabilities. These actions however, came at a cost with the Britons getting severely mauled in the process.

The Britons also used the natural defences of the rivers to resist the Roman invasion and when the tribal armies of Caratacus and Togodumnus faced and fought the Romans in a set piece battle, they did so at the River Medway. The crossing of the Stour and the Thames had both been contested in 55 and 54BC, and the Medway was the point at which Caratacus and Togodumnus faced the Roman invasion of 43AD.

The defence at the Medway stands out in ancient warfare for the unusual time the battle lasted. Sieges were usually a lengthy affair and most infantry battles were over rather quickly, the battle at the Medway was fought over two days. The tribal forces, under the guidance of Caratacus and Togodumnus had undertaken a fighting withdrawal that had had mixed results and they now faced the Romans at a defensive position at the Medway.

Webster believes that the Medway was the gathering point for the recalled tribal army that had dispersed at the news of the Roman mutiny in Gaul.<sup>26</sup> Peddie, however, writes that the position on the western bank of the Medway left a clear line

of retreat to the Thames if the Medway proved undefendable.<sup>27</sup>



Map 7. The Medway Battle (Phase 1) The Shade areas of land illustrate the boundaries of chalk and beds of sand: unshaded areas, mid-1<sup>st</sup> century AD, would have been low-lying, marshy lands. Plautius on high ground at Great Lines observes the enemy at Strood. The Batavians on the right flank, and II legion on left, prepare to cross the Medway.<sup>28</sup>



Therefore the western bank of the Thames would have been better suited as a rendezvous point where the incoming tribal war bands could assemble. The ground between the Thames and the Medway also offered a natural buffer and thus the Medway offered another good place to stall the Roman advance.

That the Romans took two days to force their way across the river points to some degree of effectiveness by the Britons in this action. Cassivellaunus in 54BC only held Caesar for a day at the Thames. It may also have been at the Medway where Plautius used an important source of tribal intelligence and diplomacy, his opponent's brother Adminius.

Several things happened at and around the defence and retreat from the Medway that affected Caratacus' and Togodumnus' ability to withstand the Roman invasion. The first was the submission to the Romans of the Dobunni, the second the out flanking movements by the Roman army at the Medway, and thirdly the death of Togodumnus on the withdrawal to the Thames. Adminius may have played a part in two of these events.

As already stated, Adminius would have had local knowledge of the area and it is probable he still wielded diplomatic prestige and power that could have been used to turn an old tribal friend of Cunobelin's, such as the Dobunni, against the anti Roman resistance led by Caratacus and Togodumnus. Dio wrote that after the defeat of Caratacus and Togodumnus on the approaches to the Medway, Plautius 'gained by capitulation a part of the Bodunni'.<sup>29</sup> Was Adminius involved?

Coin distribution shows that Cunobelin had trade dealings and, possibly, influence over factions of the Dobunni who lived west of the lands of the Catuvellauni.<sup>30</sup> As the eldest son of Cunobelin, Adminius may very well have been

familiar with the ruling members of the Dobunnic war band which had marched east to join the tribal confederation led by Caratacus and Togodumnus. The Roman advance to the Medway may have been the sign this tribe were seeking, for their 'timely surrender to the winning side'.<sup>31</sup>

Cunliffe lists Cogidubnus as the possible diplomatic vehicle for bringing the Dobunni over to the Roman side.<sup>32</sup> Adminius may also have equally filled this role. The actions of the Dobunni going over to the Roman side undermined the British confederation, weakening the forces Caratacus and Togodumnus had brought together.

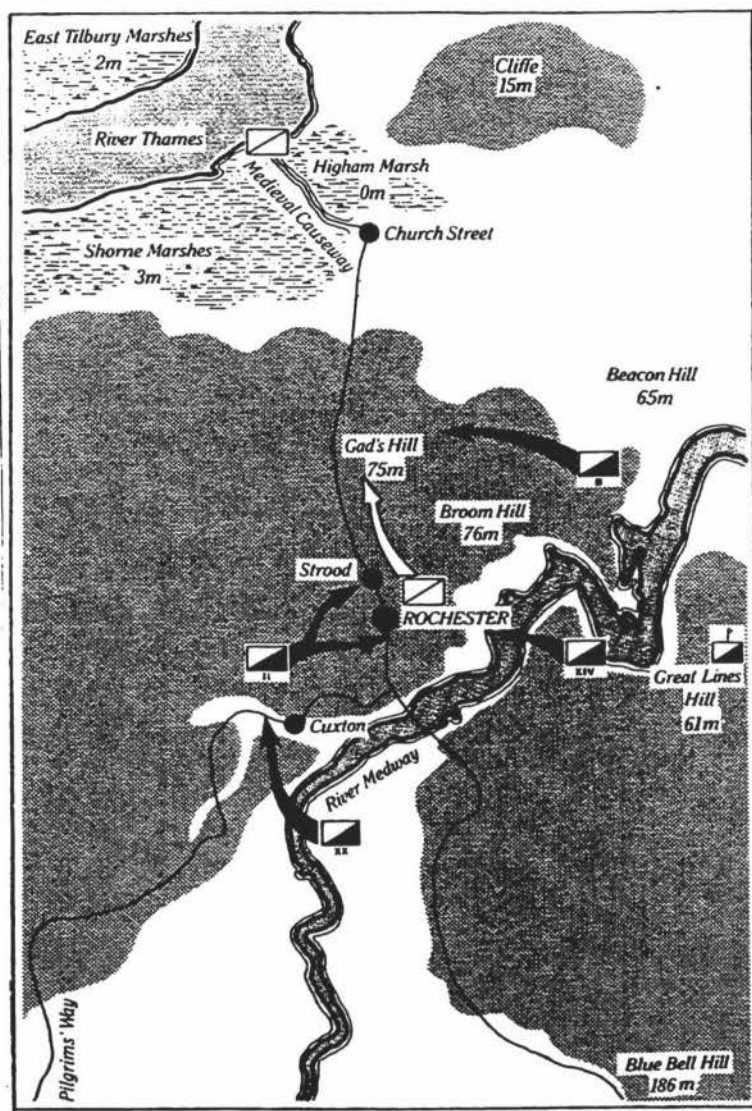
Dio wrote in his commentary on the battle of the Medway, that the Romans found the Britons camped carelessly,<sup>33</sup> which suggests (to Roman eyes at least) recklessness on the part of the tribal army, while also possibly betraying an air of confidence in the Britons leading up to the Medway. Knowledge of the tidal nature of both the Thames and the Medway could explain this confidence and apparent 'careless' deployment of the tribal army.<sup>34</sup>

To Roman eyes, the encampment of the tribal army would have appeared different and looked shabby compared to the Roman marching and winter quarters that were uniformly planned and built. The Romans were held for two days at the Medway, which requires closer analysis.

The two-day struggle could be put down to tactical decisions employed by both the tribal and Roman military leadership. As stated, the Medway seems a likely place for Caratacus and Togodumnus to hold off the Roman advance while tribal warriors rallied across the Thames.

For the Romans, the decision to hold off an immediate crossing of the Medway may have come from a need to consolidate the advancing legions, while giving time to execute manoeuvres that would surround the opposing tribal army. This would have involved the successful crossing of

the Medway up-and down-stream from the British held position.



Map 8. The Medway Battle (Phase2) The Batavian auxiliaries threaten the British line of retreat and the British detach a chariot force to deal with them. XX Legion begins to cross the Medway and XIV Legion demonstrate in front of the British position to hold their attention.<sup>35</sup>

Another dimension to the Romans decision to wait at the Medway could have come from a desire to avoid repeating a defeat similar to the one seen across the Rhine in 9AD. The psychological factor of Varus' defeat impeded, in the following decades, Augustus' and Roman expansion into the Rhine area and one can only guess whether that defeat still played on the tactical decision making of Roman commanders at the head of an invading Roman army. No written accounts are left that discuss whether this was an issue, and military disasters have a way of impacting on the psyche of a nation or empire at war, as seen throughout history and into modern times.

The successful crossing at the Medway, like the crossing of the Thames in 54BC, and the Romans attempt to encircle the Britons raises the question of whether the Romans had local help in finding undefended fords. The point at the Medway where the British leaders decided to resist the Roman crossing was possibly up to two hundred and fifty yards wide and varying in depth of five to twenty feet.<sup>36</sup>

Local knowledge of this waterway with its tidal nature, varying depths and width would have been invaluable to the Romans. Intelligence of the British numbers may have been forthcoming from the Dobunni who had come over to the invaders. Information on the tides and waterways may have come from Britons like Adminius, who had returned to the island with the Romans.

The nature of terrain along the banks of the Medway and Thames rivers consisted of low-lying marshlands ill suited for the manoeuvring of the Roman army moving in legion sized groups.<sup>37</sup> It would also have hindered the deployment of chariot and cavalry for hit and run attacks, creating a battleground that was more suited to the scattered tactics of the Britons, which supports the assumption that the defence

of the Medway suited the purpose of delaying the Roman army prior to an advance on the Thames.

The terrain between the Thames and the Medway may have been a place where Caratacus and Togodumnus sought to draw in, entangle and destroy the Romans while leaving an open line of retreat to the Thames. Dio comments on the problems the Romans faced when they fought in this terrain finding it 'difficult to make their way out, and so lost a number of men'.<sup>38</sup>

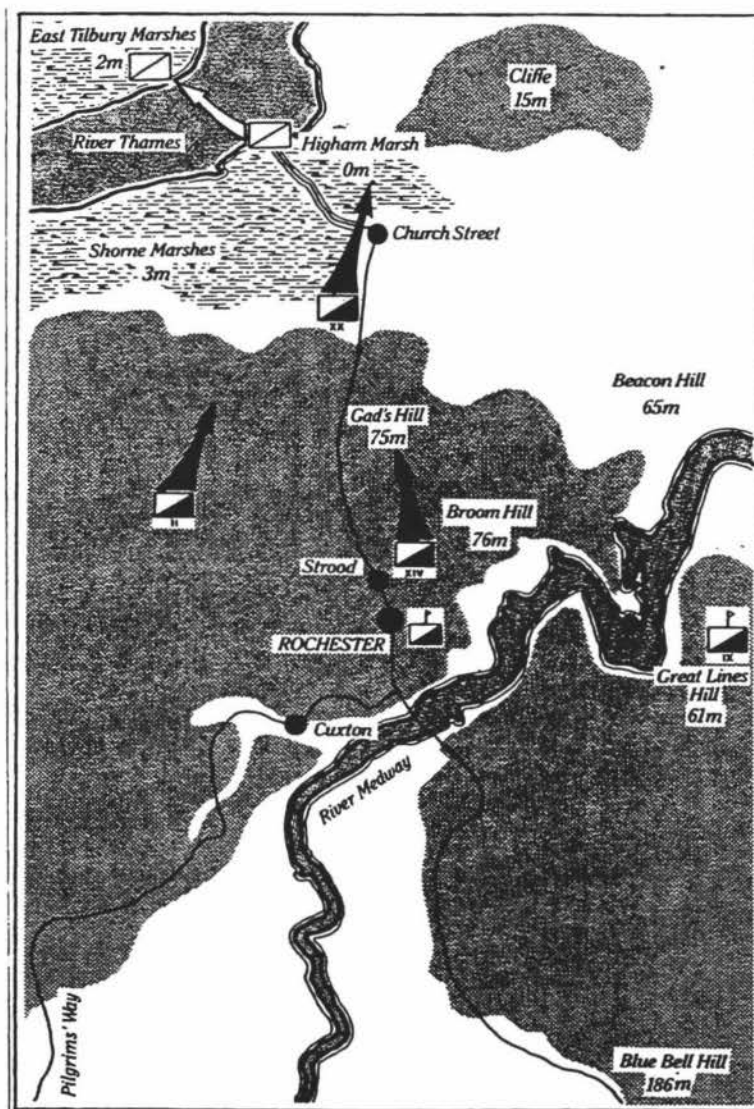
Plautius' main tactic on the Medway was quite possibly to hold the main enemy force, while the out-flanking detachments were sent out. This would have been achieved through holding the Britons attention by moving troops around to simulate preparations for an immediate assault.<sup>39</sup>

It could be assumed that by choosing the Medway, Caratacus and Togodumnus were also looking to hold the main Roman advance before drawing them into the Shorne and Higham marshes on the southern bank of the Thames where they would apply their main effort to defeat the bulk of the invading army.<sup>40</sup> The Thames would have offered a secondary line of defence for the tribal army.

The line of retreat taken by the British tribal war bands, it has been speculated, may have been along the ancient track way that became known as the Pilgrims Way. This crossed the Stour and ran north to a point where it crossed the Medway to join another track way (the Higham Upshire), which then moved north to the Thames.<sup>41</sup> This last portion of the ancient track way may have given the Britons a clear line of retreat that, with local knowledge, possibly enabled them to also hamper the advancing Romans as they withdrew.

It was on the Higham Upshire track that Plautius' auxiliary troops (Batavians), after crossing the Medway down-stream, threatened the Briton line of retreat, forcing Caratacus and Togodumnus to deploy a chariot force to

protect this vital link to the Thames.<sup>42</sup> Dio describes the tactics used by the auxiliaries during this engagement to combat the chariots. 'They fell unexpectedly upon the enemy, but instead of shooting any of the men they confined themselves to wounding the horses that drew their chariots'.<sup>43</sup>



Map 9. The Medway battle (Phase3). The British fall back across the Thames pursued by XX Legion. II Legion swings wide to block southerly escape routes. XIV Legion is now across the Medway and becomes army reserve. Plautius has established his headquarters at Rochester.<sup>44</sup>

This shows the continuation of chariot use in Britain since Cassivellaunus in 54BC, while also highlighting effective tactics to combat the chariot in ancient warfare. This engagement was hard fought by both sides and provided a serious enough distraction that allowed Plautius to send another strong force across the Medway to attack the British flank.<sup>45</sup>

With the out-flanking action executed and the main push across the Medway underway, the British withdrew, conducting a fighting retreat. The Batavian auxiliaries succeeded in crossing the Thames, while a force crossed a bridge over the Thames upstream and again the fighting intensified.<sup>46</sup> It was at this stage of the campaign that another major event occurred that affected that stability of the British tribal resistance to the Roman invasion. This was the death of Togodumnus.

During this series of actions, Togodumnus fell. However, instead of bringing about the total collapse of the British resistance, Dio claims that the fighting became more intense, causing concern for Plautius who 'became afraid, and instead of advancing any further, proceeded to guard what he had already won'.<sup>47</sup> The intensification of fighting on the part of the Britons can be put down to the knowledge of terrain and the increased number of tribal warriors who had come in from the surrounding countryside to gather on the western side of the Thames.

These developments may have had an effect on the decisions Plautius made after the Thames was crossed. In describing Plautius being 'afraid', Dio may have been recording the general's fear at repeating Varus' mistakes of 9AD. With the western bank of the Medway lost, his brother dead and the Romans in control of the Thames, Caratacus now faced the enemy alone. The main effort between the Thames and the Medway had been exhausting, and Caratacus



now watched as his army began to melt away, possibly sensing the futility of a continued resistance.

At this stage of the campaign there was a lull in the fighting and for his part, Plautius now used this time to consolidate his position and to follow the orders of his Emperor and requested Claudius' presence in Britain. 'Although Plautius could take no official action which would appear to lessen the importance of Claudius' ultimate victory, a wise commander would have occupied his time in making sure that that same victory would be inevitable.'<sup>48</sup>

The fighting between the Medway and the Thames may have lost the intensity desired by Caratacus and Togodumnus. With his brother dead, Caratacus would have ordered a withdrawal of the remaining army to the Catuvellauni centre of Camulodunum where he could assess the situation.

The defence and retreat to the Thames was a tactical decision that had ultimately failed as the Romans now held the western bank of the Thames River and were working at consolidating their hold on south-eastern Britain with a strong beach head and secure supply lines. With the British resistance pushed beyond the Thames, the internecine nature of tribal politics again threatened the confederation that had risen to resist the Roman invasion. Losses inflicted on the tribal army by the Romans may also have had a negative impact on any further attempt at resistance.<sup>49</sup>

With the arrival of the Emperor Claudius, the Roman army crossed the Thames unopposed and moved towards Camulodunum which fell to Claudius without much resistance. Claudius led the taking of Camulodunum without opposition, as the fighting needed to secure the approaches and its submission may have been executed during the lull between the securing of the Thames and the arrival of the Emperor.<sup>50</sup>



British resistance disintegrated and the tribal leaders now moved to submit to the new political and military force in Britain, Rome. The Roman army was now in control of the southeast and with Plautius camped in the old capital Camulodunum.

Caratacus found that his position and the prospect of further resistance in the southeast further compromised by the successful Roman invasion of the tribal lands of the Durotriges and thus, with his family and supporters, decided to move west. The success of Cunobelin and the rise of the Catuvellauni leading up to the invasion of 43AD set up a political environment of centralised power that fell easily to the Romans once the tribal leadership had been defeated.

This pattern had been seen in Gaul during the Roman invasion under Caesar and was the fate that now befell southeastern Britain in 43AD. The powerful states of the Catuvellauni/Trinovantes and the Atrebates had sustained links with the Roman world prior to the invasion. They were now, less than a year since the invasion, under complete Roman control.<sup>51</sup>

Again the realities of tribal politics affected the ability to unite against a full-scale Roman invasion. The Atrebates led the way in submission to the Roman Emperor (they had indeed been in a client relationship with Rome prior to the invasion), a lead that was followed by other tribes such as the Dobunni, the Cantiaci, the Iceni and the large northern confederation the Brigantes.<sup>52</sup> Eleven tribal leaders were listed on the two triumphal arches in Rome but unfortunately not individually named.<sup>53</sup>

What role did Adminius play in the new Roman province after the defeat of Caratacus and the death of Togodumnus? The ease at which the Catuvellauni submitted to Rome after the Medway battle and the punishment suffered by the Trinovantes suggests that Adminius may have been working

to regain some form of control over the Catuvellauni, now that one of his brothers lay dead and the other was making his way west. Peddie discusses the possibility of a negotiated peace sought by the Catuvellauni after the Medway in 43AD.<sup>54</sup>

Adminius is not referred to by classical sources after 43AD, yet the rise in importance of the Catuvellauni settlement at Verulamium after the invasion points to pro-Roman actions from some of this tribe. Verulamium received the rank of *municipium* (receiving a municipal charter with Latin rights),<sup>55</sup> a rare honour, around 50AD, perhaps reward for services offered by the Catuvellauni exile, Adminius.<sup>56</sup> This could possibly explain why the Catuvellauni resistance melted away so quickly after the Medway battle was decided, but the classical sources shed no light on this possibility.

The tribal army that Caratacus and Togodumnus mobilised, failed to turn back the Roman invasion force, while the tactics of river defence and indirect warfare proved inadequate in preventing the capture, and occupation of southeastern Britain. However, the time taken by the Roman commander to stabilise the front and await his Emperor gave Caratacus the time needed to move west where the second phase of his campaign against the Roman invasion would unfold in a bloody drawn-out war.<sup>57</sup>

What had influenced Caratacus to move west? Perhaps he fell back on Welsh friends of his father, Cunobelin. As already stated, Cunobelin's capacity for issuing coins was impressive and the distribution of his coinage wide. Among those minted at Camulodunum was coinage consisting of the metal rare to southeastern Britain, gold.<sup>58</sup> Cunobelin also minted coins in silver and bronze,<sup>59</sup> yet it was the attainment of gold that possibly gave this Catuvellauni chief a link to the

Welsh tribes, which was exploited by Caratacus when he moved west after the campaign in the southeast.

It has been suggested by scholars that Cunobelin and the Welsh Silures and Ordovices had contacts based on the movement of mineral wealth.<sup>60</sup> The source of Silurian gold was from the mountain area west of the Towy River, while the Ordovician gold came from an ancient source from across the Irish Sea, the Wicklow Mountains of Hibernia (Ireland). This ancient trade route moved the pale Irish gold from Hibernia, to Mona (Anglesey) and through northern Wales and then across central Britain (Watling Street) to the lands of the Catuvellauni and the Iceni in Kent.<sup>61</sup>

The link Cunobelin had made and maintained with the Welsh tribes may have proven to be important to the continued resistance by Caratacus to the Roman invasion of 43AD. The mountainous terrain of Wales provided Caratacus with an ideal theatre in which to execute the style of indirect warfare that he and his brother had attempted against the Romans at the opening stages of the invasion.

The mountains also offered safe bases from which to launch raids on the lowland tribes of the southeast that had submitted to the Romans. The distance from the Romans in the southeast and the tribes in between effectively created a buffer for Caratacus who could retreat back into the mountains after raiding against pro-Roman tribes.

The geography of Wales incorporated the western highland zone of Britain with heights, in the interior, above six hundred feet. The surrounding foothills declined in altitude to between three hundred and six hundred feet, and the remaining areas less than three hundred feet.<sup>62</sup> The deforestation that had occurred in Britain during the Bronze and Iron Age was less intensive in Wales, which was more forested than southeast Britain at the time of the Roman invasion.<sup>63</sup>

The marshlands and river ways of the Thames valley were vastly different geographically from the mountains and forests of Wales, but the tactics of indirect warfare carried out with limited success in the southeast proved easily transportable and adapted to the terrain of Wales. Caratacus proved flexible in the application of this style of warfare, be it along the track ways and marshes of Kent and the Thames valley or the mountains and valleys of southern Wales or the river flats of the Severn.

The second phase of Caratacus' response to the Roman invasion of 43AD would be planned and executed from the mountains of Wales. It was in these campaigns that Caratacus gained a fierce military reputation in Rome, as he drew the Romans into a long and costly war.<sup>64</sup>

There is no clear picture of Caratacus' actions following the Medway. The approaches to Camulodunum may have been contested, but with Togodumnus (who used Camulodunum as his base) dead, Caratacus may have seen it militarily prudent to withdraw westward using the proven tactics of harassment to screen his withdrawal with the warriors he had left.

Caratacus disappears from classical records until Tacitus wrote of him raiding out of Wales at the head of the Silures during the new governorship of Publius Ostorius Scapula in 47AD.<sup>65</sup> The target of these raids was the tribal land of the Dobunni and it seems possible that Caratacus was exacting revenge against the very tribe that had betrayed him and his brother Togodumnus prior to the defence on the Medway.

Tacitus lists the focus of Caratacus' raids as 'our allies'.<sup>66</sup> Geographically, the Dobunni lived east of the River Severn across from which were Caratacus' new allies the Silures, and therefore within reach of their raiding parties. The bringing of the western Silures into the fight against Rome and their allies show an authority Caratacus had over tribal

warriors who had no apparent reasons for supporting him, short of plunder.

Caratacus' resistance to Rome from the mountains of Wales was a continuation of his stand in 43AD. How he managed to gain leadership of the Silures remains a mystery. The prospect of loot and the chance to raid across the Severn must have been attractive to the war-like Silures and the fact that Caratacus drew them out on the eve of winter also show remarkable military authority.

The actions of Caratacus in 47AD proved to be an indication of how he would carry on military operations against the Roman invaders. It would also draw the Welsh tribes into direct conflict with the Roman military machine as Claudius sought to secure his new western most frontier.

After 43AD, Plautius set about securing the southeast while pushing the II Legion under Vespasian into the lands of the Durotriges. This campaign also cut off the Dumnonii, creating the Fosse Way frontier, which, by 47AD, ran from Exeter in the southwest to the Humber in the northeast.<sup>67</sup>

The Severn represented a natural boundary between the Silures and the Dobunni and afforded a serious obstacle for the Romans in restraining this new threat that had risen in the west. To Caratacus, the Severn valley was a natural series of track ways that opened up into the area of the Fosse Way frontier. These track ways would be used to raid the land of the Dobunni, while also causing instability on the Roman frontier and within the new province.

The actions of Caratacus posed strategic and tactical questions for the new Roman military commander, Scapula, who arrived in Britain in 47AD. Swift action was required to stabilise the western frontier and Scapula proved equal to the task. He was also aware that the west would cause strategic problems if elements from the Welsh tribes could

successfully bring factions of the large northern confederation of the Brigante into the conflict.

Like the Iceni in the east, the Brigante, under their queen Cartimandua, had entered into a client-based relationship with Rome during the early stages of the invasion (definitely by 51AD).<sup>68</sup> However, despite this arrangement, Cartimandua did not exercise complete control over all tribal factions of the Brigante, so Scapula prudently moved to separate the northern Welsh tribes from the southern Brigante. Wales and Brigantia would remain linked in the strategic planning of the Roman military governors from this time.<sup>69</sup>

Between 47 and 51AD, Scapula extended the Roman frontier to encompass the whole Cornish peninsula and southern Britain from the Bristol up to Deva (Chester) and across the southern boundary of the Brigantes from the Mersey to the Humber.<sup>70</sup> Like the requirement of stabilising the Rhine frontier before invading Britain, the northern Brigantian frontier needed stabilisation before any move westwards into Wales was considered. With the creation of the Fosse Way frontier line, Scapula effectively boxed Caratacus into Wales. This situation wasn't too much of a problem for Caratacus at this time, but it strategically neutralised him.

The decentralised nature of the tribal groupings discussed in the opening chapter may have been an initial barrier for Caratacus in organising any military operations by Welsh war bands against the Romans, but he was able to mobilise serious Welsh response by 47AD. The Medway, while being a holding action, exhibited elements of set piece battles over the defence of the river. Caratacus' actions from southern Wales showed a return to indirect warfare well suited to the tribes and terrain of the West.

Cunliffe has given a picture of the geo-political situation in Wales and lists five tribal groupings, the Silures and Demetae of southern Wales, the northern grouping of the Deceangli and Gangani, and the Ordovices of central Wales and the eastern Cornovii.<sup>71</sup> These larger tribal groupings would have been fragmented and smaller groups are known, such as the Decanti and the Octapatie, which disappeared from history or became incorporated into larger tribal groupings as Wales became more centralised under eventual Roman control.<sup>72</sup>

Leading up to 43AD the Welsh tribes had remained separated from the Belgic culture of the southeast and experienced minimal contact from the Roman world. The Silures and Cornovii of the Severn River and valley had established trade links, as discussed above. These links did not warrant military support to the southeast in 43AD, yet after the rapid fall of the southeast, Rome appeared to threaten the status quo of Welsh politics. This forced the western tribes to decide on how they would respond to Roman invasion.

The decentralised nature of the Welsh tribes created a military climate quite different to that of the southeast, yet it appears to have suited Caratacus' aims of continued resistance. He grasped this point and found the Silures, who appear to have been happy to fight with or without other tribal war bands, willing partners.<sup>73</sup> Once the main obstacle of gaining leadership was overcome, the politically and geographically divided tribal groupings offered a flexibility of movement to harass the Romans. This decentralisation meant that war bands could travel through their tribal areas between scattered bases of operations that the Romans would have difficulty finding and attacking. The style of warfare carried into Wales would have (because of terrain) been infantry based using a hit-and-run style. It would have



required the Romans to divide their forces in an attempt to contain the “roving” war bands.

Initially, Caratacus, the Silures and possibly elements of the Cornovii and other anti-Roman tribal warriors from the southeast, harassed the tribes within the new Roman province. Archaeological remains such as reinforced earthworks at Minchinhampton in Gloucestershire suggest a base of operation of some six hundred acres in extent, for Caratacus and his warriors prior to 47AD. This was possibly the location he gained a reputation as a leader among the Silures.<sup>74</sup>

Despite the staunch anti-Roman stand of the Silures, not all Welsh tribes opposed Roman moves into Wales. As was seen in the southeast, the Iron Age tribes in Wales were divided in their response to Roman invasion. The southwestern tribe, the Demetae, are not recorded by the classical sources as being hostile to Rome and don't appear to have fought.<sup>75</sup>

Hill forts in southern Wales show no sign of offensive action by Romans and the slighting of defences appear to be very limited.<sup>76</sup> The Welsh tribes who did resist may have witnessed the easy fall of the Durotrige hill forts to the II Legion in 43-44AD, and decided on indirect tactics. In Caratacus the Silures at least had a war leader with experience in indirect tactics and a first hand knowledge of the Roman method of war.

From 47AD Scapula worked at stabilising the western frontier. Tacitus narrates the events of the military governor and his moves to secure his rear. He ordered the disarming of the client kingdom of the Iceni, which caused resentment that boiled over into open rebellion. This faction of the Iceni were defeated by a force Tacitus describes as ‘allied troops’.<sup>77</sup> Whether these ‘allied troops’ were Britons is not clearly stated, but it isn't unreasonable to think of Atrebatian



tribesmen or even pro-Roman Iceni riding to battle under the command of their new allies (the Romans) against the disgruntled warriors. It should be noted that the Iceni chief Prasutagus retained his client status after this revolt.<sup>78</sup>

With the Iceni dealt with, Scapula was free to move against the Deceangli of north Wales.<sup>79</sup> This provided the Romans with a chance to conduct a reconnaissance in force to an unknown part of Britain.<sup>80</sup> As noted earlier, Scapula saw the importance of splitting the hostile potential of the Welsh tribes from hostile factions within the Brigante confederation.

Tacitus recorded the uncertain loyalty within factions of the northern Brigante and that Scapula had to withdraw from Wales to deal with hostile elements among the Brigante who soon settled down with the approach and military action of the Romans. The submissive behaviour seen in Brigantia was not, however followed by the Silures in southern Wales.<sup>81</sup> This denied the Roman administration a secure and quiet frontier in the west that Cartimandua provided.

The events of 47AD point to a conflict that gave Caratacus and the Silures the tactical initiative, leaving Scapula reacting to actions across a wide frontier. The Deceangli were a strategic target for Scapula and the actions of some of the Iceni and particularly the Brigante highlighted this threat of a united resistance in the west and north.

The actions of Scapula in the north also left Caratacus and the Silures free to carry on actions in the south. The Silures under Caratacus' direction and leadership may have felt secure within the safety of the mountains and forests, however, strategically, Scapula was still working to isolate and box them in.

With the north secure, Scapula concentrated his forces for a push up the northern flank of the Severn valley before moving through to the line of the Usk River.<sup>82</sup> The land of

the Dobunni provided the base from which to launch the push into southern Wales. This campaign would have required fighting in the forests and mountainous valleys of the Black Mountains and the Brecon Beacons and would have been hotly contested.

With the *Classis Britannica* (Roman Navy) sailing off the coast of southern Wales and up the Bristol Channel Scapula would be encircling the hostile tribes of Wales. Caratacus' position and that of the Silures in these two mountain regions was slowly but surely compromised. Scapula's actions may have forced Caratacus to retreat into central Wales by 50AD after two years of hard forest fighting. This action involving half the Roman force in Britain (the XX Valeria and the XIV Gemina Legions) would have taken several years.<sup>83</sup>

The mountains of southern Wales offered a different protection for the tribal war bands resisting Roman invasion than the marshlands of the southeast. The forested valleys enabled mobility not reliant on horses or chariots and it was 'search and destroy' type tactics that Scapula turned to once he had encircled Caratacus and his warriors.<sup>84</sup>

Tacitus wrote of Caratacus moving north to save the situation thus avoiding the encirclement that Scapula had fought hard to execute.<sup>85</sup> The terrain of Siluria, while mountainous and forested, was not impossible for the Romans to penetrate. The lands of the Ordovices in central and northern Wales, where Caratacus sought a new area of operations, were 'some of the wildest and most inaccessible terrain in the whole of Britain, with endless opportunities for ambush and evasion'.<sup>86</sup>

The reasoning behind moving into the land of the Ordovices was a continuation of tactical thinking that was seen as early as 43AD, when Caratacus and Togodumnus drew the Romans on to the rivers of the Medway and the Thames. The mountains of Central Wales (reaching heights

of over six hundred feet) would lengthen the Roman logistic train and isolate the army from the coastal support of the *Classis Britannica*. The geography of Central Wales would have created difficulties in concentrating forces for an advance or a main attack.

If the Romans had a feeling of foreboding at the thought of crossing the Channel in 43AD, it can only be imagined how they viewed the forests of central Wales. The thoughts of the forests across the Rhine frontier must have been imposing on the morale of the Roman army. With methodical training and discipline behind him and his troops however, Scapula moved into central Wales with the aim of destroying the Welsh resistance while hoping to kill or capture Caratacus.<sup>87</sup>

Caratacus drew the Romans deeper into Wales, where he met Scapula in a pitched battle that resulted in his defeat and the destruction of his tribal army. This raises questions of the resistance leader's motivations for fighting a set-piece battle.

The physical environment of this theatre suited the defender and this could be why Caratacus chose to fight Scapula the way he did. Caratacus was sure to leave an open line of retreat into northern Wales with the option to move into Brigantia. His movements there, after the battle in Central Wales, confirm this as an option and while Scapula was concentrating his forces and energies in central Wales, the land link between northern Wales and Brigantia opened.

The battle that took place in the central mountains of Wales may have been a gamble taken by Caratacus in an attempt to defeat Scapula in a set-piece battle on a site of his choosing, where, if faced with defeat, he could retreat with the remainder of his force northwards. This action may be compared to the actions taken at the Medway in 43AD with equally disastrous results, the loss of tribal forces and the initiative.

The prospect of Caratacus opening a second front from across the Brigantian frontier has also been suggested in an attempt to explain his moves and actions in central Wales.<sup>88</sup> The encirclement of the Silures by Scapula would have forced Caratacus and, quite possibly much of the fighting force of that tribe northwards.

This tactical decision is not unsound when seen as a way of drawing the Romans further inland thus stretching their supply lines. It would also have possibly given Caratacus the initiative and the benefit of choosing a place to finally stand in force against the Roman invaders. It would have also provided him with the possibility to ensure his leadership and defeat the Romans in the west through a decisive battle.

With this departure from an effective indirect style of warfare, Caratacus and his followers fought and were defeated in 50AD by Scapula and his troops. Scapula's complete victory, which included the capture of Caratacus' family, was only soured by the escape of the resistance leader into northern Wales and then Brigantia.<sup>89</sup>

The site of this major battle is unclear. However, Webster, who gives a detailed account of this final engagement between the forces of Caratacus and Scapula, places it in the hills on the upper stretches of the Severn, 'probably in the narrow valley below Caersws'.<sup>90</sup> This location has been put forward paying close attention to the words of Tacitus who described a river, a makeshift barrier or rampart and 'the frowning hilltops'.<sup>91</sup>

Caratacus had drawn up his forces along the hilltops and behind the makeshift barriers. The Roman troops advanced in *testudo* and then broke down the wall and once they came within sword range, the armoured versus the unarmoured factor counted against the tribal warriors.<sup>92</sup>

Roman skill of arms used in set-piece battle proved too great again for an Iron Age tribal army. However this victory

and the capture of Caratacus by the Roman client queen Cartimandua did not stabilise the western frontier for the Romans, and the Silures remained belligerent opponents to Roman invasion beyond the Caratacus' military leadership in Wales.

The idea has been put forth that Caratacus had support from the Druids, and that, with their sanction, led the resistance against Rome.<sup>93</sup> The proximity of Mona (Anglesey), the Druid centre for Britain, to the operations of Scapula from 47-50AD, suggests that the Druids, feeling physically threatened, fuelled opposition to Roman invasion.

The Druids, it is also suggested, played some part in the revolt of 60AD, a date that corresponds with the sacking of Mona by the Roman military governor Suetonius Paulinus. There seems limited evidence that the Druids were involved in the initial response to Roman invasion but Tacitus writes at length of them in his accounts of the Welsh campaigns.

Was Caratacus moving north under the instruction of the Druids as a strategy to unite Western and northern anti-Roman factions? The issue of the Druids is speculative but whatever his motives, Cartimandua further endeared herself to the Romans and strengthened her position as leader of the Brigante by capturing Caratacus and handing him in chains over to her protectors.<sup>94</sup> Caratacus' trust in Cartimandua was betrayed and the realities of tribal politics again undermined the potential for a pan-tribal resistance to the Roman invasion.

Caratacus was unique in resistance to the Roman invasion as he was able to successfully carry out sustained hit-and-run operations against Rome in different areas of operation. His automatic leadership over the tribal confederation that responded to the Roman invasion of 43AD was undermined by the fragile nature of tribal politics at the time. The rise of

the Catuvellauni under Cunobelin created resentment among other tribal groups who submitted to Rome. This ensured the swift fall of the southeast.

Militarily, Caratacus showed an ability to adapt to fighting the Roman army. Despite losing the series of battles in the southeast, Caratacus showed considerable tactical flexibility at the Medway and Thames rivers and then adaptability in transferring his indirect style of warfare to the west.

His choice to stand and fight in the mountains of central Wales ultimately ended his resistance to Rome. In attempting to move north and join the western resistance with factions of the Brigantes, Caratacus showed strategic understanding equal to Scapula. Both these decisions proved to be his two greatest mistakes.

Caratacus' defeat did not spell the end of resistance to the Roman invasion, for Wales and the North continued to cause trouble for the military administrator of the new province. Caratacus had been a continued thorn to the security of Roman interests in Britain, but a major threat then emerged from within the province, clearly showing that the southeast was not as stabilised as the Romans thought.

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Reference Notes, Chapter Four.

- <sup>1</sup> Dio. *Roman History Volume VII. Book LX*, 19.
- <sup>2</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 150.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 77.
- <sup>4</sup> Branigan. pp. 6-7.
- <sup>5</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 69.
- <sup>6</sup> Branigan. pp. 5-6.
- <sup>7</sup> T.N. Dupuy. *The Harper Encyclopedia of Military History: From 3500B.C. to the Present.* (4<sup>th</sup> edition). New York, HarperCollins Publishing. 1993, p. 128.
- <sup>8</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 69.
- <sup>9</sup> Webster. 1980. Claims that Cunobelin was Tasciovanus' son p. 49&62. Branigan questions Cunobelin's legitimacy as Tasciovanus' blood or even adoptive son. p. 8.
- <sup>10</sup> Branigan. p. 9.
- <sup>11</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 69.
- <sup>12</sup> Cunliffe. 1988, p. 156.
- <sup>13</sup> Branigan. p. 7.
- <sup>14</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 49.
- <sup>15</sup> W, Rees. *An Historical Atlas of Wales: From Early to Modern Times.* London, Faber & Faber. Plate 13.
- <sup>16</sup> Peddie. 1987. p. 20.
- <sup>17</sup> Suetonius. *The Twelve Caesars.* Book V, 17.
- <sup>18</sup> Dio refers to Verica as Bericus. See Dio. *Roman History Volume VII. Book LX*, 19. Levick states that Claudius was prepared to support the reinstatement of Verica, as leader of the British Atrebates, yet the Emperor realised a full invasion (along with all its economic benefits) was the only way to prevent the Catuvellauni ousting Verica again. See Levick. 1990, p. 140.
- <sup>19</sup> Branigan. p. 9.
- <sup>20</sup> Peddie. 1997, p. 71. Austin & Rankov. p. 129.
- <sup>21</sup> Peddie. 1997, p. 47. G. Webster. *The Roman Invasion of Britain.* New Jersey, Barnes and noble Books. 1980, p. 94.
- <sup>22</sup> Peddie. 1997, p. 47. I. Richmond. *Roman Britain.* Middlesex, Penguin books Ltd. 1955, p. 20.

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- <sup>23</sup> Dio. *Roman History Volume VII*. Book LX, 19.
- <sup>24</sup> *ibid.* Book LX, 20 .
- <sup>25</sup> Webster. 1980, p. 97.
- <sup>26</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>27</sup> Peddie. 1997, pp. 80-81.
- <sup>28</sup> *ibid.* p. 81.
- <sup>29</sup> Dio. *Roman History Volume VII*. Book LX, 20. It has been argued that the Bodunni was in fact the corruption by Dio of the tribal grouping of the Dobunni.
- <sup>30</sup> Frere. 1987, p. 50.
- <sup>31</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>32</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 120.
- <sup>33</sup> Dio. *Roman History Volume VII*. Book LX, 20.
- <sup>34</sup> Peddie. 1997, p. 80.
- <sup>35</sup> *ibid.* p. 83.
- <sup>36</sup> Webster. 1980, p. 98.
- <sup>37</sup> Peddie. 1997, p. 83. The map on this page shows that the crossing point and immediate area of operations for the II & XX legions were in low-lying marshy land.
- <sup>38</sup> Dio. *Roman History Volume VII*. Book LX, 20.
- <sup>39</sup> Webster. 1980, p. 99.
- <sup>40</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>41</sup> Peddie. 1997, p. 82. Webster. 1980, p. 98.
- <sup>42</sup> Dio. *Roman History Volume VII*. Book LX, 20. Peddie. 1997, p. 82.
- <sup>43</sup> Dio. *Roman History Volume VII*. Book LX, 20.
- <sup>44</sup> Peddie. 1997, p. 85.
- <sup>45</sup> A.R. Burns. 'The Battle of Medway, A.D. 43.' In *History*. June 1953, p. 112.
- <sup>46</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>47</sup> Dio. *Roman History Volume VII*. Book LX, 21.
- <sup>48</sup> Wachter. 1978, pp. 18-19.
- <sup>49</sup> Webster. 1980, p. 102.
- <sup>50</sup> Frere. 1987, p. 51. Peddie. 1997, p. 92.
- <sup>51</sup> Hodder & Millet. 1990, p. 28.



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- <sup>52</sup> M. Millet. *The Romanization of Britain: An Essay in Archaeological Interpretation*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1990, p. 46.
- <sup>53</sup> Webster. 1980, p. 106.
- <sup>54</sup> Peddie. 1997, p. 94.
- <sup>55</sup> J. Wachter. *The Towns of Roman Britain*. London, B.T. Batsford Ltd. 1974, p. 18.
- <sup>56</sup> Peddie. 1997, p. 94.
- <sup>57</sup> Peddie gives a detailed analysis of the tactical movements of Plautius and the strong position he held with the crossing of the Medway and of the Thames no longer proving a defensive obstacle. Peddie also discusses the presence of the *Classis Britannica* on the Thames threatening Camulodunum. This would have made Caratacus position a difficult one to defend. 1997, pp. 99-100.
- <sup>58</sup> Wachter. 1979, p. 3.
- <sup>59</sup> Frere. 1987, plate 30.
- <sup>60</sup> Richmond. 1955, p. 16.
- <sup>61</sup> Ross & Robins. pp. 114-115.
- <sup>62</sup> Rees. Plate 3.
- <sup>63</sup> Dark & Dark. p. 42.
- <sup>64</sup> Tacitus. *The Annals* XII, 36.
- <sup>65</sup> *ibid.* XII, 31.
- <sup>66</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>67</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 123.
- <sup>68</sup> Frere. 1997, p. 54.
- <sup>69</sup> D.R. Dudley. 'Tacitus and the Roman Conquest of Wales'. In E. Birley, B. Dobson & M. Jarrett. (Eds) *Roman Frontier Studies 1969*. Cardiff, University of Wales Press. 1974, p. 30.
- <sup>70</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 123.
- <sup>71</sup> *ibid.* pp. 107-110.
- <sup>72</sup> J.L. Davies. 'Roman and Native in Wales: First to Fourth Centuries AD.' In E. Birley, B. Dobson, M. Jarret. (Eds) *Roman Frontier Studies 1967*. Cardiff, University of Wales Press. 1974, p. 35.
- <sup>73</sup> D.R. Dudley. 1974, pp. 27 & 32.
- <sup>74</sup> C. Kightly. *Folk Heroes of Britain*. London, Thames and Hudson. 1982, p. 20.
- <sup>75</sup> J.L. Davies. p. 35.
- <sup>76</sup> *ibid.* p. 37.

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- <sup>77</sup> Tacitus. XII, 31.
- <sup>78</sup> Webster. 1978, pp. 59-60.
- <sup>79</sup> Tacitus. XII, 32.
- <sup>80</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 60.
- <sup>81</sup> Tacitus. XII, 32.
- <sup>82</sup> Peddie. 1997, p. 166.
- <sup>83</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>84</sup> G. Webster. *The Roman Imperial Army*. London, A & C Black Limited. 1985, p. 41.
- <sup>85</sup> Tacitus. XII, 33.
- <sup>86</sup> Kightly. p. 24.
- <sup>87</sup> Peddie. 1997, p. 166.
- <sup>88</sup> *ibid.* p. 169.
- <sup>89</sup> Tacitus. XII, 35.
- <sup>90</sup> Webster. 1993, pp. 29 & 30-31.
- <sup>91</sup> Tacitus. *The Annals*. XII, 35.
- <sup>92</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>93</sup> Any discussion on the Druids is speculative due to the limited evidence on them.
- <sup>94</sup> Caratacus and his family were taken to Rome where they were paraded before the people of that city. According to Tacitus, when Caratacus was presented to Claudius, he stated that had 'my moderation in prosperity been equal to my noble birth and fortune, I should have entered this city as your friend rather than as your captive'. He then justified his reluctance to submit to Rome at the time of invasion, and stated the greatness of his capture after a prolonged war. Caratacus ended his speech by saying, 'My punishment would be followed by oblivion, whereas, if you save my life, I shall be an everlasting memorial of your clemency'. This impressed Claudius who pardoned Caratacus and his family under the condition, however that they remained in Rome. See Tacitus. *The Annals*. XII, 36 & 37. Dio wrote that on walking around Rome after his liberation, Caratacus, seeing the splendour and magnitude of the city exclaimed 'And can you, then, who have got such possessions and so many of them, covet our poor tents?' See Dio. *Roman History Volume VIII*. Book LXI, 33. Of Caratacus no more is heard.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BOUDICCAN REVOLT OF 60AD.

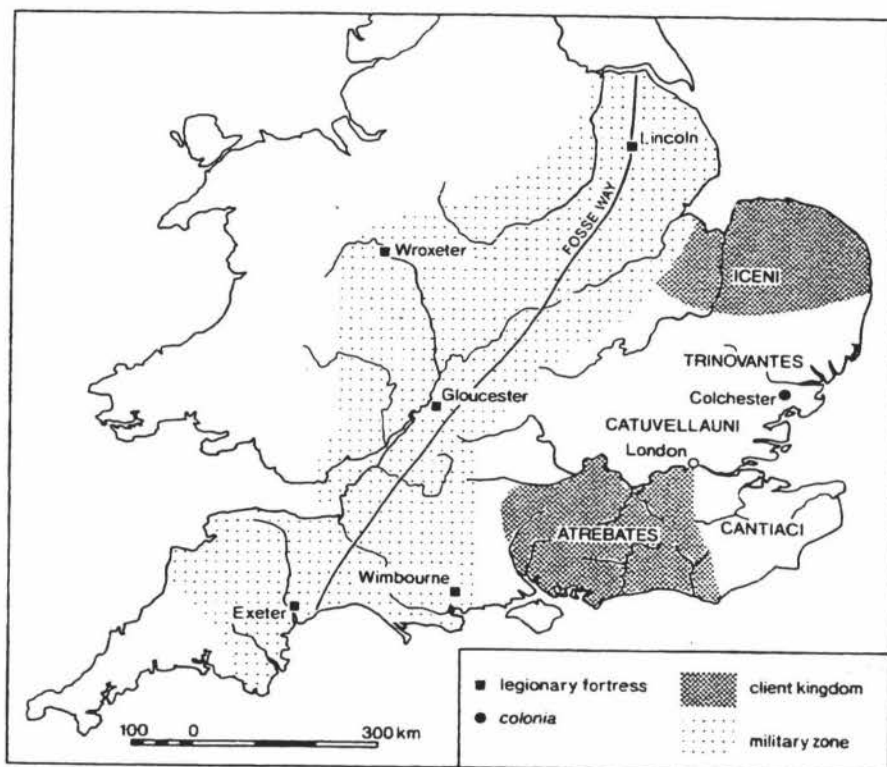
*‘...they flew to arms and stirred to revolt the Trinobantes and others who, not yet cowed by slavery, had agreed in secret conspiracy to reclaim their freedom. It was against the veterans that their hatred was most intense.’ Tacitus.<sup>1</sup>*

In 60AD the Roman province of Britannia exploded into bloody rebellion that saw one legion (one quarter of the Roman garrison of Britain) taken out of operations and another pinned down in the southwest, while the three major towns of the province, Colchester (Camulodunum), Verulamium and London were burnt to the ground. The British chieftain, Caratacus had been defeated and sent to Rome nine years previously, and the Roman military governor, Suetonius Paulinus, had just completed a successful campaign against the island of Mona (modern Anglesey), the centre of western British resistance and a place of religious importance. That year the Iceni, a client kingdom of Rome rose in a rebellion that rocked the province.

Why, after more than fifteen years of Roman rule, did the Iceni (one of the most easterly tribes) rise in rebellion and attack the province with such violence? This chapter will briefly look at the background of the rebellion, while discussing the Iceni and their leaders, Prasutagus and Boudicca and their relationship to Rome. An analysis of the Icenian method of warfare will be undertaken and comparisons made with the campaigns of Cassivellaunus and Caratacus. Lastly the impact of the rebellion and its consequences will be discussed.

As observed earlier, the formal policy used by the Romans in dealing with military frontiers on the outer limits of

Roman expansion was to enter into an agreement with local tribal groupings. This ancient system of diplomacy was a means of securing a frontier area with minimal cost in troops and supplies for the Roman Empire. The system of clientage between Rome and the Iceni fell into this *ad hoc* socio-political tradition in 43AD.<sup>2</sup>



Map 10. Southern Britain at the in 60AD. (From B. Cunliffe. *Greeks, Romans and Barbarians*. London, Guild Publishing. 1988 p 160.)

In 54BC, the mention of the Cenimagni points to their peripheral role in tribal and Roman diplomatic exchange.<sup>3</sup> Their involvement in the initial response to Roman invasion

has already been noted and they appear to have come over to the Roman side early on in 43AD.<sup>4</sup>

The system of clientage was set up to secure Iceni loyalty and stabilise the eastern region of the province. The Icenian ability to remain detached from the expansion of the Catuvellauni after Caesar's withdrawal suggests a strong tribal block. Archaeological evidence supports this, and can be seen in the non-existence of coinage attributed to Cunobelin in Iceni lands.<sup>5</sup> The action of the Iceni in submission to Rome in 43AD also suggests a continuation of pro-Roman politics that may be traced as far back as Caesar.

Once the initial British resistance was crushed, the southeast of Britain fell into step with the process of Romanisation, becoming incorporated smoothly into the Roman Empire, as had happened in Gaul in the first century BC. Under the system of clientage, the Iceni settled into the new system of political control joined to, but independent of, the Empire. Tribal leadership went to their chief (Prasutagus) with Roman support.

Unlike the response of Cassivellaunus and Caratacus, the Iceni resistance to Roman invasion came after seventeen years of Roman control. The Iceni showed the potential for unrest in 47AD, and Roman military action was required to settle a revolt that threatened to weaken a young Roman province on the verge of a serious move against the Deceangli of northeastern Wales.

Under the clientage system, the Iceni continued to prosper and their King Prasutagus worked to consolidate his own and his tribe's position within the new Roman province. Just as the Iceni remained isolated from the events of the power struggle in the southeast in the first half of the first century AD and of the invasion of 43AD, they also appear to have distanced themselves from the incursions of Roman traders.<sup>6</sup> Archaeology supports this contention, showing an

absence of Roman trade goods such as wine amphorae in the land of the Iceni.<sup>7</sup>

The absence of Roman trade goods and traders came from tribal policy, but the richness of native archaeological finds in the land of the Iceni point to a tribe with a wealth in gold as seen in the Hoard L find at Snettisham in Norfolk.<sup>8</sup> This wealth in gold that flowed from Ireland, through northern Wales across central Britain and then into the continent, and the Iceni's control of the eastern route may help explain the political and economic independence the Iceni had prior to the invasion of 43AD.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the isolation from Roman trade prior to the invasion, the Iceni, by entering into clientage with Rome, opened themselves up to the money economy and financial system that Roman occupation brought. Their isolation only 'increased the culture shock to the Iceni after AD43 and contributed to the uneasy relationship between the tribe and Rome after the invasion'.<sup>10</sup>

In 47AD the Iceni revolted when the Roman military commander, Scapula, sought to disarm them before his push into north Wales. Part of the tribe rebelled and while the revolt was put down, Prasutagus retained his leadership over the Iceni and the tribe maintained its client status. These actions were of a military nature for the Romans but possibly an issue of pride and honour for those Iceni who rebelled as they were being forced to disarm, losing their traditional right to bear arms. This move to disarm the nobles may have been seen by the Iceni as a grave slight, and a potential threat.

The events of 47AD have been linked to the major revolt of 60AD. However, while the minor rebellion early on in the conquest of Britain had strategic implications for the Romans, it may have been over-stated with regards to Boudicca's revolt. The reason and nature of the first Iceni

uprising was vastly different to the motivations and circumstances in 60AD and a gradual process of Romanisation had occurred within Icenia.

Clientage was the system that gave title and control to a tribal leader, but was not transferred on the death of that client king. Perhaps Prasutagus misunderstood this arrangement or was never fully aware of the time limit put on this agreement. On the death of Prasutagus, the Romans began the full incorporation of the Iceni kingdom into the Roman administrative province.<sup>11</sup> This move was badly mismanaged by the Roman procurator of Britain and the tribe resisted.

Claudius had entered into a client relationship personally with Prasutagus to achieve a strategically important arrangement during the opening stages of the invasion.<sup>12</sup> Nero succeeded Claudius and was now faced with a Britain quite different to the one his adoptive father had invaded in 43AD. Most of the southeast had been quickly subdued and the frontier was being pushed westward. The Brigantian queen Cartimandua was established in the north giving a degree of stability to the northern frontier. The stabilised province within the frontier was open to the full impact of the Roman administrative vehicles, not to mention the non-imperial investors.

The traders often preceded the legions, while the investors and merchants followed them. One such investor was Seneca who was an advisor to the young Emperor Nero and had invested heavily in the new province, lending forty million *sesterces* to tribal chiefs.<sup>13</sup> Nero was also looking at the province of Britain in terms of economics and cash flow.

Suetonius describes the frivolous financial activities of Nero and of his further activities to regain the wealth he had spent.<sup>14</sup> As a province of the Empire, Britain, like other provinces, felt the brunt of Neroian taxation.<sup>15</sup> On the death

of Prasutagus, problems arose over the acquisition of personal investments and what was considered goods in lieu of taxes or Imperial property.

It appears that the tribal lands of the Iceni were ripe for the taking and the events that unfolded set the foundation of the revolt. Prasutagus left half his kingdom to the Emperor and the remaining half to his two daughters. Scholars, supporting Tacitus' view, have interpreted the actions of Prasutagus as a move to secure a form, if somewhat limited, of autonomy for the tribe.<sup>16</sup> The client agreement, however, came to an end in 60AD when Prasutagus died.

Modern and classical scholars discussing the actions of the Roman administration and the incorporation of the Iceni into the Province once Prasutagus died have written much on the events sparking the revolt of 60AD.<sup>17</sup> The financial implications of Roman moneylenders and Imperial policy towards Britain set in motion events that ended in mass destruction and social, financial and administrative disruption within the new province.

The end of the client kingdom arrangement was followed with the quick movement by the procurator, Catus Decianus, to strip the kingdom of its wealth. These actions may have been undertaken with Imperial authority.<sup>18</sup> The resistance to these moves were dealt with in a brutal fashion. Tacitus wrote that Prasutagus wife, Boudicca 'was scourged and his daughters outraged', while Icenian nobles were insulted as their property was stripped and they and their family members were enslaved.<sup>19</sup> The aggressive actions of Decianus roused the Iceni who fell in behind their disgraced and enraged queen, Boudicca, who had been publicly flogged as her daughters were publicly raped.<sup>20</sup>

The revolt that exploded in the lands of the Iceni was one action in a series of events that were unfolding in Britain and must be looked at in context. The military governor,



Suetonius Paullinus, was involved in a military push into north Wales that had two main goals. The first being an attempt to encircle the hostile Ordovices, while also attacking the island of Anglesey (Mona) with the intention of destroying the main supply base for the western resistance to Rome and also destroying the alleged base of druidic power in western Britain.

The Druids have been linked to the events of 60AD in an attempt to point to a conspiracy of British resistance against Rome. Tacitus' accounts mention the Druid sanctuary at Mona and Paulinus' destruction of it on the eve of the Boudiccan revolt, but whether an agreement between the Druids and the house of the Iceni existed seems vague and out of character with the pro-Roman politics the Iceni and Prasutagus displayed prior to 60AD.

The Iceni had been under Roman control since 43AD and in the seventeen years leading up to the revolt, Roman administration had been working at stabilising the province. The nature and violent out-pouring of the Iceni revolt suggest an explosion of feeling not a gradual movement towards rebellion. What role the Druids played in the action of the Iceni and the tribes that joined them is not clear. Allowing that they might have been sowing dissent within the province, the Druids were being pressed within close range of their main base of operations in the western resistance to Rome. What could the Druids have offered the Iceni that they were not already positioned to take?

The Iceni were joined by tribal groupings from beyond their lands. The other major tribal group to join the Iceni, who seem to have retained its tribal name after 43AD, was the Trinovante who had 'suffered too much from the new colonists and the land appropriations'.<sup>21</sup> These land appropriations and the locations of the *colonia* at the site of the old Trinovante capital of Camulodunum, plus the

erection of the temple to the divine Claudius greatly angered the members of this tribe who rose in support of the Iceni.<sup>22</sup>

Tacitus hinted at others 'not yet cowed by slavery' who joined the Iceni in open rebellion against the Romans but failed to name them.<sup>23</sup> That Tacitus describes these allies as 'not yet' cowed by slavery suggests that these factions may have come from beyond the Roman frontier. This support, one could assume, may have been forthcoming from the tribal lands of the Brigante.

The classical sources clearly state the Iceni gaining support from the Trinovante and others from beyond the frontier, so the Iceni led a confederation of tribes against the Roman forces in Britain. Like Cassivellaunus in 54BC and Caratacus from 43-51AD, the leader of the Iceni showed authority in uniting different tribes briefly in response to Roman invasion. This leader was Boudicca.

Boudicca was the widow of Prasutagus but not the heir to his title or fortune. The sizable wealth that Prasutagus had was divided equally between Nero and his own daughters. The treatment of Boudicca and her daughters created an environment where she could morally legitimise her leadership of the Iceni and control of the tribal army that gathered around her.

Boudicca was not alone in being an example of females ruling over tribal groupings in Iron Age Britain. To the north, Cartimandua ruled over the Brigantes. These two examples must however be put into context. Cartimandua became a client of Rome, which on occasion supported her rule with military forces.<sup>24</sup> Boudicca came to the rule of the Iceni only after the actions of the Roman procurator Decianus. They remain as only two instances when females ruled their tribes.

Prasutagus left half his kingdom to his daughters creating the potential for female rule within the tribal framework of the Iceni. This suggests that the Iceni may have accepted

female rule, yet it raises the question of why Boudicca was not left the kingdom? That she led the revolt alludes to her having royal blood and tribal authority. At any point, the actions of the Roman procurator (Boudicca's flogging and the rape of her daughters) was enough to create a 'symbolic' rallying point for the Iceni warriors and other disaffected tribal war bands.<sup>25</sup>

Tacitus wrote that the Iceni and others had 'agreed in secret conspiracy to reclaim their freedom.'<sup>26</sup> The time it took the Iceni and their confederates to rise in revolt is unclear and the classical scholars do not give a time frame, but the suggestion of conspiracy could point to the planning and preparation leading up to open hostilities towards the Roman authorities in Britain.

Time would have been needed to rebuild the tribal war bands up to combat strength after their disarming in 47AD. Supplies would have been gathered and the mobilisation called with rallying points arranged. This was possibly achieved under the nose of the Roman authorities that were ignorant of how gravely the actions of Decianus had offended the Iceni.

Paullinus, as military governor, was occupied in the west and Roman eyes would have been focused on the western frontier and to the north. It is quite possible that the last thing the military governor expected was a revolt to the east within the province that the Romans believed stable. But a revolt erupted pulling Paullinus out of Wales, where he had just destroyed resistance located on the island of Mona, ahead of his troops who were ordered to march east and join him as fast as possible.

The style of warfare that characterised the revolt of 60AD was vastly different to the indirect tactics used by Cassivellaunus in 54BC and then by Togodumnus and Caratacus in 43AD, or the warfare the Romans faced in the

mountains and forested valleys of Wales. The Iceni opened their war with hard-hitting attacks on strategically soft targets that represented physical symbols of Roman rule. Camulodunum (Colchester) was the first to fall to the tribal army that moved south.

The symbolic targets of Roman rule highlighted the focus of the Iceni revolt and their grievance at an administrative system that they may have felt had let them down. The occupants of the *colonia* at Camulodunum were also a point of grievance for the Trinovantes who had suffered at the hands of the veterans who have been acting in a lawless manner, evicting the people from their homes and enslaving them.<sup>27</sup> Camulodunum was surprised and surrounded and 'the temple where the soldiers had assembled was stormed after a two-day siege'.<sup>28</sup>

Camulodunum was not defended by fortifications and the two-day siege shows a grim determination that the veterans had in attempting to hold out for any relief force that may have been coming to their aid. None came and a great fire destroyed the capital town of the new province.<sup>29</sup> The means used to destroy Camulodunum was force of strength through the sheer weight of numbers and the destruction that took place is still evident today in a thick layer of ash in the soil at Colchester. Similar ash layers are also to be seen at London and St Albans (Verulamium), which suffered the same fate.

After the destruction of Camulodunum, the tribal army (or elements of it) moved north to meet the IXth Legion under the command of Petilius Cerialis, where Tacitus claims he was routed, losing all its infantry.<sup>30</sup> Webster gives a short summary of the actions of Cerialis at the time of the revolt and suggests that his rash and impetuous nature may have influenced his decision to march south in haste to relieve Camulodunum.<sup>31</sup>

When and how this element of the IXth Legion (approximately two thousand infantry and five hundred cavalry<sup>32</sup>) were overcome is unsure, but their destruction and Cerialis' escape with only his cavalry must have required a degree of planning from the rebels and a lack of reconnaissance and tactical thinking on the part of the Roman commander.<sup>33</sup>

The destruction of Camulodunum was a hard-hitting attack by a large force. The defeat of Cerialis and elements of the IXth Legion appears more the indirect tactic of an ambush. A force of two thousand Roman legionaries would have been a formidable force if they were able to form up and fight in battle order. Iron age armies rarely won set-piece battles against such a Roman force.

Paullinus, meanwhile, had arrived in the southeast from Wales and sought to ascertain the situation facing him. Camulodunum had fallen and the remainder of the IXth Legion and its commander were cut off and out of action in their northern base at Longthorpe on the Nene River.<sup>34</sup> His main force (the XIVth, XXth Legions and possibly elements of the IInd) was making its way eastwards along Watling Street from Mona and the other available legion; the II Legion was stationed in the southwest at Exeter. Paullinus moved on to Londinium (London).

The tribal army under Boudicca was moving in an unorganised mass within the province looting and burning as they went. With no available force at hand Paullinus took what troops could ride and moved up Watling Street to join his main force. In leaving Londinium to its own defences Paullinus, so Tacitus wrote, chose to 'save the province at the cost of a single town'.<sup>35</sup> The fate of Londinium was the same as Camulodunum; it was looted and burnt to the ground.

The destruction of Londinium was a huge blow to the new province. Camulodunum was the capital and *colonia* of the province but London was a new commercial centre. Its destruction affected trade and supply to the province. For Boudicca and her army it was another soft target that also represented the face of Romanisation.

Its destruction was complete and satisfied the Briton's thirst for revenge and loot, but it bought Paullinus much needed time allowing him to take back the initiative. Paullinus needed to consolidate his forces to meet the tribal army that, after destroying Londinium, turned west to hunt out the remaining military threat to the rebellion.

The governor sought help from the II<sup>nd</sup> Legion at Exeter in an attempt to strengthen his forces. Its commander, Poenius Postumus, however, refused to bring his force out to meet up with Paullinus. Postumus' reasons for not moving northeast to meet up with the military governor may be explained by actions of the Durotriges who rose against the Romans in 60AD and occupied the area under Postumus' command.<sup>36</sup>

Archaeological evidence suggests that the Romans faced hostility from the Durotriges at the time of the Boudiccan rebellion. A hill fort war cemetery at South Cadbury has been dated to the time of the revolt, while the remains of fires at Winchester also fall within the Boudiccan period.<sup>37</sup>

The evidence that supports armed response from the Durotriges in 60AD suggests that they continued anti-Roman attitudes beyond their destruction as a tribal military force in 43-44AD. The time span between the initial invasion and the revolt of 60AD does not seem to have blunted Durotrige attitudes to the Roman conquest.

Postumus may well have had problems within his area of control and felt compelled to maintain a watch over the

southwest. The area may have also represented a hostile environment in which to march out and join Paullinus.<sup>38</sup> Whatever his reasons Postumus (who later killed himself),<sup>39</sup> remained at Exeter and the II<sup>nd</sup> Legion failed to enhance Paullinus' fighting strength.

The next town to fall to Boudicca's forces was the Catuvellauni centre at Verulamium. Like Camulodunum and Londinium, its destruction was by the marauding army of Boudicca, which was expanding in number as the momentum of events drew warriors to the tribal army that had so far carried all before them. Very little military planning would have been required in the advance on Camulodunum, Londinium or Verulamium and indeed Boudicca may have struggled to hold tribal authority over the expanding number of warriors and followers.

The tribal mass moved westward in an attempt to catch up with Paullinus. Boudicca's failure to deal with the Roman commander when he was separated from his troops handed the initiative to Paullinus. He now sought to face the rebellious enemy and end the threat in a set piece battle on terrain of his choosing.

There is no proven location for the final battle in the revolt of 60-61AD, but Mancetter has been the focus of archaeologists and historians in locating a likely place where Boudicca's revolt came to an end.<sup>40</sup> Mancetter is located along the military road of Watling Street and northwest of where it was crossed by another military road, the Fosse Way that ran northeast from Exeter.<sup>41</sup> Paullinus may have chosen this site for a battle, as it would have been ideal for meeting the II<sup>nd</sup> Legion, had they marched north as expected.

It has been suggested that the name Mancetter is of Celtic origin meaning 'place of the chariots'.<sup>42</sup> The image of Boudicca riding into battle against the Romans in her scythe wheeled chariot has been immortalised by her statue on the



Thames Embankment opposite the Houses of Parliament in London. This image is somewhat of a romantic portrayal and while there is a tradition of chariot warfare in Iron Age Britain, the reality of Boudicca's forces being able to mobilise a large mass of chariots for the revolt is questionable considering that the Iceni had been disarmed after 47AD.

Caesar in 55-54BC and Plautius in 43AD both experienced facing chariots when fighting in Britain and this tradition was found as the Romans moved against the Caledonii in northern Britain. The military implications of the British chariot would surely not have been lost on the military authorities, although the Iceni may have been allowed to use chariots as a means of transport as Diodorus, when writing of the Gallic use for chariots stated, it being a vehicle for travel and fighting.<sup>43</sup>

Dio and Tacitus both wrote of Boudicca riding in a chariot leading her army into battle.<sup>44</sup> These classical sources give evidence of the existence of chariots and there is a possibility that the allies who rallied to Boudicca's standard from outside the province may have bought chariots into the area of operation.

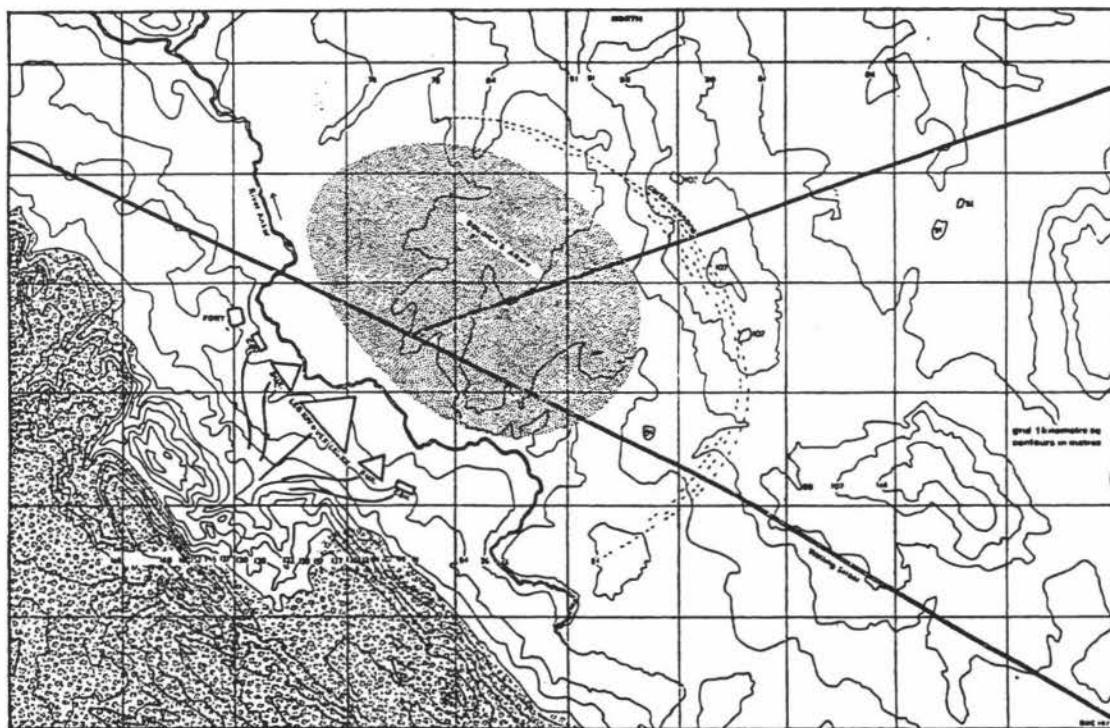
The name Mancetter, if referring to the great battle in 60AD, may refer to the presence of chariots in Boudicca's army, however it may also be a reference to the wagons that the camp followers travelled in as they accompanied the war bands during the revolt. Tacitus wrote of how sure the Britons' were of success, even drawing their wagons up to watch the forthcoming battle, which in turn hindered the retreating warriors who could not escape.<sup>45</sup>

Tacitus gives the combat phase of this engagement only a few lines while Dio commits much more to this decisive battle on the western frontier of the Empire (much is given to the speeches made by Boudicca and Paullinus prior to the



battle).<sup>46</sup> With Paullinus holding the initiative, Boudicca and her army appear to have fallen into a well-planned trap.

Classical sources writing on the revolt have stated that the tribal army of Boudicca vastly out-numbered the Roman army. Dio claimed that Boudicca had a force 'of about two hundred and thirty thousand men' and Tacitus numbers just less than eighty thousand British dead.<sup>47</sup> A more conservative figure has even put the tribal army at as few as twenty thousand with the army of Paullinus numbering between ten-thirteen thousand men.<sup>48</sup> The army of Boudicca may have realistically been as large as one hundred thousand.<sup>49</sup>



Map 11. The battle between Boudicca and Paullinus at Mancetter 60AD. (From G.Webster. *Boudicca: The British Revolt Against Rome AD60*. London, B.T. Batsford Ltd.1978 p 98).

Outnumbered, the Roman governor positioned his troops to exploit their strengths of close in-fighting tactics and exposed the weakness of the numerically superior tribal army.<sup>50</sup> Dio's figure is clearly exaggerated and Tacitus only gives casualty numbers, but the fact that the tribal army under Boudicca's sought a pitched battle against the Romans may point to a belief in their invincibility. This may have come from a confidence in numbers and/or from a belief that they were the vehicles of divine retribution, an instrument of the goddess Andrasta (the unconquerable).<sup>51</sup>

The battle that bought an end to the Boudiccan revolt was what Cassivellaunus in 54BC, and then Togodumnus and Caratacus in 43AD tried to avoid, a head-on set piece battle with a large Roman force. Caratacus had fought an indirect style of warfare in Wales, eventually finding defeat in the land of the Ordovices in 51AD due to the choice of a pitched battle against Scapula.

Tacitus recounts that nearly eighty thousand Britons fell that day, at a cost of only four hundred dead Roman soldiers and a further four hundred wounded.<sup>52</sup> This suggests perhaps that Cassivellaunus and the Catuvellauni princes were wise in their tactical moves to avoid the swords of highly trained and armoured Roman soldiers. For the tribesmen, it was a colossal defeat

As discussed, the tribal armies of Iron Age Britain were not generally heavily armoured and even the tribal nobility of the Iceni may have not been that well armoured considering that the southeast had been disarmed during the late 40s and 50s AD. The high number of dead warriors was evidence of the efficiency of Roman arms and the result of what happened when lightly armed warriors stood and fought the legions in the field.

Accepting the view that the primary weapon of Iron Age warriors in Britain was the spear or throwing javelin could also explain the huge casualty rates suffered by tribal warriors against the Roman legions. It has been seen historically that once the mass of the tribal warriors met the Roman soldiers they had little defence against the Roman *gladius* (a short stabbing sword). The indirect style of warfare seen in the tactics of Cassivellaunus and Caratacus possibly came from understanding the reality of what generally happened when Roman soldiers got in close. Suetonius Paullinus, a career soldier of some experience,<sup>53</sup> would also have been aware of the effectiveness of his soldiers against tribal warriors, and therefore would have had this in mind when he choose the site of battle and the formations his troops held.

Paullinus is thought to have chosen a site in which his legions and auxiliaries had a secure rear (protected by forest) and flanks (protected by cavalry), thus forcing the tribal army to come on to his position in limited numbers that denied application of their numerical strength while maximising the Roman front.<sup>54</sup> If Camulodunum, Londinium and Verulamium were soft targets, what Boudicca and the tribal war bands now faced were battle hardened troops who had just carried out the successful destruction of the stronghold of western resistance on Mona and were looking to avenge the defeat of the IXth Legion at the hands of this tribal army.

Showing a discipline that characterised Roman training, Paullinus' troops stood firm while pouring a shower of javelins into the ranks of the advancing tribal warriors and then with the support of the auxiliaries charged in wedge formation into the enemy.<sup>55</sup> As so often happened when Iron Age armies fought the Romans in set piece battle, the war bands broke, and victory went to Paulinus and a great slaughter followed.

The cost of the revolt was immense. Three major centres of the Roman province lay in ash and ruin. The IXth Legion had been seriously mauled requiring immediate reinforcement of 'two thousand legionaries, eight cohorts of auxiliaries, and a thousand cavalry', from the Rhine frontier.<sup>56</sup> The cost in lives as listed by classical accounts were massive. Tacitus numbered around seventy thousand 'citizens and allies' and 'little less than eighty thousand of the Britons'.<sup>57</sup> Dio claimed that two cities fell while 'eighty thousand of the Romans and of their allies perished, and the island was lost to Rome'.<sup>58</sup> He must have been implying that the province was temporarily out of Roman control.

The province also suffered after the fighting. Due to the major disruption that the revolt created, crops had not been sown and the land had been left untended, while many had also left the land to go to war.<sup>59</sup> This and the repression that followed would have killed many that the sword had not.

The revolt represented a response to the Roman invasion of 43AD in the sense that it was a military reaction to the process of administrative consolidation following the fall of the southeast. It also showed flaws in settling the issue of clientage when that agreement came to an end. This was seen in the actions of Catus Decianus whether or not he had an imperial mandate, and the violence reflects the disbelief and anger shown by the Iceni.

Clientage was a short-term solution that in 60AD backfired. The Iceni, who had always maintained friendly relations with the Roman invaders, revolted after their king died and the procurator moved in to secure the tribal wealth for the province. The motivation of the Iceni was outrage. Their decision to rebel attracted other disaffected people who had suffered under Roman control since 43AD. Elements from beyond the area of Roman control also rallied to the standard of revolt Boudicca planted. Their motivation may

have come from a realisation that the Romans would eventually move their frontier out.

The confederated nature of the warriors involved in the Boudiccan revolt showed a continuation in Britain from 54BC of the potential creation of a united front against Rome, which occurred in times of stress. Unlike the campaigns of 54BC and 43-50AD, the actions of Boudicca and her army were against mainly civilian targets. The tribal army had limited success against the IXth Legion but was totally defeated by Paullinus and his combined command of the XIVth and XXth Legions.

The action against the IXth Legion and their notoriously rash commander Cerialis, are believed to have been an ambush that would have required planning on the part of the tribal warriors.<sup>60</sup> However against the methodical preparations of Paullinus, who had a large force of battle-hardened veterans, the confederacy was destroyed and the revolt fell apart.

There were other important departures from trends seen in the military responses of 54BC and from 43AD. The first was Boudicca's ability to hold together the tribal confederation that had rallied to her standard. This army appeared to accept her leadership to the last, even though she led them to total defeat.

Another obvious departure from the leadership of Cassivellaunus and Caratacus was that Boudicca was female, and points to a willingness of warriors of Iron Age Britain to follow a woman into battle. This may have been due to Boudicca representation of a symbolic and even religious figurehead leading a confederation of tribes that had various grievances.

The province was shaken but recovered after severe retribution from Paullinus who kept his forces 'under canvas to finish the remainder of the war'.<sup>61</sup> For Boudicca and the

Iceni the revolt was fatal. Boudicca died after the confrontation with Paullinus and the tribe lost any form of autonomy or political self-government. Military control was established to administer the area once the tribe had been isolated and neutralised as a military threat after 61AD.<sup>62</sup>

The Trinovante, the only other tribal group definitely named in the revolt of 60AD seem to have retained their tribal identity after the revolt. The creation of the *colonia* at Colchester may have forced the ruling elite of the tribe, who reclaimed control of the Trinovante from Caratacus and Togodumnus after 43AD, to re-establish their tribal administrative centre at Chelmsford, which remained after 60AD.<sup>63</sup>

For the Durotriges of the southeast, the Boudiccan revolt was also a last gasp of opposition to the Roman invasion. It has been suggested the inaction of the II<sup>nd</sup> Legion came from pressure from the potential hostility of the Durotriges who had held anti-Roman feeling since the time of Caesar in 55BC. Archaeological evidence supports the notion of Durotrige participation against Roman forces in Britain in 60AD, yet more work in this field is needed to gain a clearer picture. The Durotriges were never named again in classical accounts with regard to response to the Roman invasion after 60AD, and must have settled down into the process of full Romanisation.

The revolt was the last attempt at military response to the Roman invasion in southeastern Britain as the people of Iron Age Britain became incorporated into the administrative system of the Roman Empire. The complete destruction of the revolt would have also crushed the fighting spirit of the tribal warriors within the province. The tribal leaders who opposed Rome would have been killed during the revolt or during the repression after it.<sup>64</sup>

The tactics employed by Boudicca at the head of another tribal confederation were a departure from those employed by Cassivellaunus and Caratacus. The fast moving mass of tribal warriors, with their families following, easily overcame the towns that were the targets of the revolt. This massive tribal army swept aside resistance offered at the *colonia* at Camulodunum.

The defeat of elements of the IXth Legion that was moving south to relieve the *colonia* may have been the only example during the Boudiccan revolt where planning and indirect tactics were used against Roman troops. The final confrontation between the tribal confederation and the forces under Paulinus reinforced the point that lightly armed tribal warriors could rarely withstand direct battle with heavily armed Roman troops. This was a departure from the indirect style of warfare used by Cassivellaunus and Caratacus that had disastrous results.

Lastly, the Icení revolt represented military opposition from a tribal group who had historically shown pro-Roman politics. The minor rebellion in 47AD was quite possibly a natural reaction by proud warrior at attempts to disarm them. The revolt of 60AD was far more serious and was thus dealt with swiftly. As the ashes of the Boudiccan revolt cooled, Rome looked to their western and northern borders. The southeast had been subdued and remained a peaceful part of the Roman Empire allowing the process of Romanisation to continue for over three hundred years until the legions were recalled from the province in 407AD<sup>65</sup>.

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Reference Notes, Chapter Five.

- <sup>1</sup> Tacitus. *The Annals*. Book XIV, 31.
- <sup>2</sup> Cunliffe. 1988, p. 159.
- <sup>3</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 36.
- <sup>4</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 122.
- <sup>5</sup> Jones & Mattingly. pp. 52-53.
- <sup>6</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 47.
- <sup>7</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 41. James. 1993, p. 119.
- <sup>8</sup> K. Nurse. 'Iron Age Gold in the Hills' in *History Today*. Volume 41. 1991, p. 3.
- <sup>9</sup> Ross & Robins. pp. 114-115.
- <sup>10</sup> P.R.Sealey. *The Boudican Revolt Against Rome*. Buckinghamshire, Shire Publications Ltd. 1997. p. 6.
- <sup>11</sup> Cunliffe. 1988, p. 161.
- <sup>12</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 55.
- <sup>13</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 83. Dio. *Roman History*. LXII, 2.
- <sup>14</sup> Suetonius. Book VI, 31-32.
- <sup>15</sup> M.T. Griffin. *Nero: The End of a Dynasty*. London, B.T. Batsford Ltd. 1984, pp. 186-7.
- <sup>16</sup> Frere. p. 71. Webster. 1978, p. 87. Cunliffe. 1975, p. 125. Tacitus. *The Annals*. Book XIV, 31.
- <sup>17</sup> Tacitus. Dio. Suetonius. Webster. 1978. Wachter. 1979. Cunliffe. 1988. Griffin. James. 1993.
- <sup>18</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 87.
- <sup>19</sup> Tacitus. *The Annals*. Book XIV, 31.
- <sup>20</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 88.
- <sup>21</sup> *ibid*.
- <sup>22</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 126.
- <sup>23</sup> Tacitus. *The Annals*. Book XIV, 31.
- <sup>24</sup> Webster. 1985, p. 54. James. 1993, p. 132. Tacitus. *The Histories*. Book III, 45.
- <sup>25</sup> James. 1993, p. 67.
- <sup>26</sup> Tacitus. *The Annals*. XIV, 31.
- <sup>27</sup> *ibid*.



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- <sup>28</sup> *ibid.* XIV, 32.
- <sup>29</sup> Wachter. 1995, p. 90.
- <sup>30</sup> Tacitus. *The Annals*. XIV, 32.
- <sup>31</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 90.
- <sup>32</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> Kightly. p. 42.
- <sup>34</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 90. Webster. 1993, p. 109.
- <sup>35</sup> Tacitus. *The Annals*. XIV, 33.
- <sup>36</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 95. Cunliffe. 1988, p. 210. R. Alston. *Aspects of Roman History: AD14-117*. London, Routledge. 1998, p. 123.
- <sup>37</sup> Cunliffe. 1993, p. 218.
- <sup>38</sup> Kightly. p. 48.
- <sup>39</sup> Tacitus. *The Annals*. XIV, 37.
- <sup>40</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 97. Ross & Robins. p. 90.
- <sup>41</sup> Jones & Mattingly. p. 91.
- <sup>42</sup> Ross & Robins. p. 90.
- <sup>43</sup> Diodorus. *Diodorus of Sicily*. Book V, 29.
- <sup>44</sup> Dio. *Roman History*. LXII, 8. Tacitus. *The Annals*. XIV, 35.
- <sup>45</sup> Tacitus. *The Annals*. XIV, 34 & 37.
- <sup>46</sup> Dio. *Roman History*. Book LXII, 12. Tacitus. *The Annals*. XIV, 37.
- <sup>47</sup> Dio. *Roman History*. Book LXII, 8. Tacitus. *The Annals*. XIV, 37.
- <sup>48</sup> Beresford Ellis. 1995, p. 91.
- <sup>49</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 99.
- <sup>50</sup> *ibid.* p. 97.
- <sup>51</sup> *ibid.* p. 95.
- <sup>52</sup> Tacitus. *The Annals*. XIV, 37.
- <sup>53</sup> *ibid.* XIV, 29.
- <sup>54</sup> Tacitus. *The Annals*. XIV, 34. Webster. 1978, p. 99.
- <sup>55</sup> Dio. *Roman History*. LXII, 12. Tacitus. *The Annals*. XIV, 37.
- <sup>56</sup> Tacitus. *The Annals*. XIV, 38.

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<sup>57</sup> *ibid.* XIV, 33 & 37.

<sup>58</sup> Dio. *Roman History*. LXII, 1.

<sup>59</sup> Tacitus. *The Annals*. XIV, 38. James. 1993, p. 139.

<sup>60</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 91. Kightly. p. 42.

<sup>61</sup> Tacitus. *The Annals*. XIV, 38.

<sup>62</sup> Wachter. 1995, p. 25.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.* p. 114.

<sup>64</sup> Webster. 1978, p. 129.

<sup>65</sup> Dupuy. p. 186.

## CONCLUSION.

The military response to Roman invasion from the time that Caesar crossed the Channel in 55BC to the Claudian invasion of 43AD and down to the Boudiccan revolt of 60AD produced a wide variation of actions taken by the tribes of Iron Age Britain.

Iron Age Britain was an area divided. There were regional variations seen along ethnic lines in the obvious Belgic/non-Belgic divide with quite possibly linguistic variations, while geography also fostered regional variations. Links were found among the different tribal groups who lived in Britain and there were also strong links to tribes across the Channel in Gaul and links between the tribes of Wales and Ireland to the west.

Tribal and environmental variations were reflected in the way tribes responded. Some like the Cantiaci and the Durotriges resisted Roman Invasion, while others such as the Iceni embraced Rome. The Trinovante and Atrebate after initial resistance, submitted to the Roman army. These actions came from a desire to preserve tribal power or out of a need by tribal chiefs to reclaim political control of their tribe.

Cassivellaunus led a confederation of tribal groups against Caesar and while his tactical ability proved sound his ability to hold the confederation together was unsuccessful. Tribal differences meant that a tribe was more likely to preserve their position in the political environment in Britain than stand by a confederation. Caesar faced many tribal groupings with differing agendas when he arrived in Britain, and this undercurrent of tribal manoeuvring worked against the survival of the confederation in successfully resisting Rome.

The Catuvellauni are an example of a tribe who formed out of smaller grouping following Caesar's withdrawal from Britain but made a great impact on tribal response to the Roman invasion of 43AD. Under Cunobelin the Catuvellauni extended their domination to eventually control most of southeastern Britain. When the Romans invaded in 43AD the Catuvellauni responded by forming a large confederation of tribes to resist the invasion. This confederation was led by Caratacus and Togodumnus, but was a gathering of tribal war bands that were subject to political control under the Catuvellauni.

The confederated nature of the initial response to the Roman invasion of 43AD proved problematic as seen in 54BC. The confederations only lasted as long as the tribal army remained undefeated. The realities of pan-tribal politics proved a stumbling block to a united front as tribes, for different reasons, sought to secure their own survival. This was a natural reaction to a period of political, social and economic upheaval. This reality destroyed tribal entities that had taken decades to evolve, while providing security and survival for others.

Cunliffe argued that the people of Iron Age Britain reacted to two major events of upheaval and threat. The first of these were folk movements from the continent and the second, Caesar's invasion of Gaul and then Britain. The first reaction was the fragmenting into small tribal groupings. The second and later response was the creation of consolidated tribes and pan-tribal leadership.<sup>1</sup>

Cassivellaunus, Caratacus and Boudicca all satisfied the need for pan-tribal leadership, yet the realities of sustaining a tribal confederation in the face of a Roman invasion were only seen in Boudicca who had caught the Romans totally unprepared. Both Cassivellaunus and Caratacus struggled to maintain the confederate armies they controlled, while

Boudicca led the tribal army under her leadership to total destruction.

Caratacus opposed the Romans with a confederation that was made up of tribes subject to Catuvellauni control. This confederation collapsed when elements submitted to the Romans and Caratacus failed to stop the Roman advance. The submission of tribes represented the importance they put in their own tribal aspirations.

Boudicca drew war bands from tribes that resented Roman oppression or who lay outside the province. Resentment rose from the Iceni who had been allies to the Romans under the system of clientage. Once the arrangement finished on the death of Prasutagus, the Roman administrators and private investors sought to recover their economic interests. The measures taken against the Iceni were unacceptable and resentment flared into open revolt.

Tribes within the province who had also suffered at the hands of the Roman administration joined the revolt in 60AD and the Icenian queen represented a rallying point. Once the forces under Boudicca's command stormed Camulodunum and prevented the IXth Legion entering the fight, the confederation remained in tact until its defeat by Suetonius Paulinus.

Boudicca's revolt represents the only time when a confederated army remained in tact to the end of the fighting. That is a telling point. The three case studies show how the tribes responded and why. They also show how the tribes conducted the campaigns and the fighting styles employed.

In 54BC, Cassivellaunus drew Caesar westward from the coast, using indirect tactics to harass the Roman army as it moved closer to the Thames. These tactics were effective in avoiding a direct confrontation with the Roman legions. The chariot, with supporting cavalry was used in effective hit and

run tactics along established track ways to hinder the advancing legions.

Cassivellaunus also utilised rivers as defensive barriers to withstand Caesar in 54BC. The Cantiaci had used this tactic and Cassivellaunus continued it even strengthening the defences on the riverbanks with sharpened stakes above and below the water line. This showed that Cassivellaunus was prepared to stand and fight in fixed positions if the terrain appeared suitable.

Hill forts were also utilised by the war leader Cassivellaunus in his response to the Roman invasion. This tactic was seen across Western Europe and the preferred tactic of the Durotriges of southern Britain. Cassivellaunus found he couldn't withstand the disciplined efforts of the Romans within his fortified enclosure and the Durotriges never needed to defend their hill forts against Caesar, but would rely on this defensive tactic in 43-44AD.

Caratacus fought the Roman invasion of 43AD in varying theatres of operation and proved to be one of Rome's greatest opponents in Britain. His flexibility in tactical operations, the choice of tactics and the exploitation of terrain show a leader of great ability. His joint leadership of the tribal confederation in 43AD may have been automatic, yet his success in gaining the leadership of first the Silures of south Wales and then the Ordovices of central Wales, who shared no ethnic link to Caratacus, shows that he could cross these ethnic barriers. This enabled him to maintain prolonged military resistance to Roman invasion.

Militarily, Caratacus continued Cassivellaunus' indirect style of warfare leading up to the Medway defence. This defence, like Cassivellaunus' defence of the Thames again, shows a continuation of tactics by British war leaders. The river defence, while effective in delaying the Roman advance, underlined the British inability to fight the Romans

head on and win set piece battles. The harassing tactics of hit-and-run attacks were more effective in hindering the Roman advance. They also suited the use of throwing spears and javelins.

As Caratacus moved west, he reverted back to the hit-and-run tactics of an indirect style of warfare. Caratacus adapted quickly to the terrain of the Welsh mountains and forests that represented the western frontier for the Romans. With the southeast subdued the fight moved westward. The Fosse Way provided Caratacus with a long frontier to work along during the initial phase of his war in the west.

The Romans, under the capable Scapula, managed to box in Caratacus and separate the western tribes from factions of the Brigantes. This meant that the war was pushed further into the mountains of Wales where Caratacus continued an indirect style of warfare. It drew the Romans on, and this may have given Caratacus confidence to break from a winning formula and take the Roman soldiers on in a set-piece battle. This was a fatal decision that ended Caratacus' war against Rome and the resistance to Rome lost a very capable war leader.

The tribes of the west maintained a resistance to Rome after 51AD but the invaders eventually subdued the Welsh tribes and stabilised the western frontier. This enabled them to push northwards into the lands of the Brigantes and then into the lands of the Caledonian tribes who occupied the area of Britain that became Scotland.

If the Brigantian queen Cartimandua had not betrayed Caratacus, this Catuvellauni war chief may have brought anti-Roman factions of the northern tribes into the war against the Romans. This would have been a strategic set back for the Roman military commanders in Britain who would have been faced with two hostile frontiers to contain.

However, even with Caratacus in chains, the resistance to the Roman invasion continued and the indirect style of warfare carried on in the mountains of Wales until Suetonius Paulinus came to Britain. He identified the Island of Anglesey (Mona) as vital to the continued western resistance to Rome and attacked and destroyed it. This was a major blow to the military resistance to the Roman invasion, but in the east a revolt broke out that refocused Roman attention to inside the province.

The Iceni remained detached from the resistance to Caesar's invasions in 55 and 54BC and failed to support the Catuvellauni-led coalition that faced the Romans in 43AD. Instead they cemented their pro-Roman stance by gaining a client agreement with Claudius. The ending of this arrangement and the incorporation of Icenia created grievances that ended in open revolt.

The military tactics used by Boudicca and her army were of a direct nature. They relied on the combination of overwhelming strength of numbers and speed. The targets were the soft civilian targets of fledgling towns. These targets were overcome, with Camulodunum the only town to put up a two-day defence.

Elements of Boudicca's army moved north to head off the IXth Legion led by their rash commander Cerialis. Perhaps here the forces of Boudicca reverted to the indirect tactics used by Cassivellaunus and Caratacus in 54BC and 43-51AD. The IXth suffered a defeat that put them out of the revolt and rendered them useless to their governor Paulinus. That a battle-ready force of heavily armed Roman soldiers was overcome suggests that they were ambushed, and it might be assumed that Boudicca (or one of her war leaders) adapted the tactics to the threat, or the Roman commander made serious tactical errors.



The attack that knocked the IXth Legion out of the campaign was a departure from the tactics that characterised the Boudiccan revolt of hard and fast hitting attacks on soft targets. The final decisive action in the revolt was a set-piece battle that ended the hopes of destroying the Roman hold on Britain. Again lightly armed tribal warriors failed to compete with the strength of the heavily armoured Roman soldiers.

Archaeology and classical sources have both left evidence of how the ancient Britons fought and what weapons they used. The masses of the tribal armies were lightly armed with the principal weapon the spear or throwing javelin. The tribal elite wore armour and helmets and also used the spear or javelin as an offensive weapon in a style of indirect warfare.

The limited use of armour worn and weapons used by tribal warrior in Iron Age Britain had implications for the evolution of fighting styles seen in Britain during the Roman invasions. Both Cassivellaunus and Caratacus used indirect tactics against the Roman army. This style of warfare may have evolved out of necessity. Heavily armoured Roman legionnaires proved more than capable of defeating tribal armies in set-piece battles. The casualty figures given also point to the disaster that struck when the unarmoured met the armoured.

Indirect warfare suited lightly armed warriors when faced with armoured opponents. The spear would then be the primary weapon for warriors fighting the Romans from a distance. The primary weapon for the tribal war bands of Iron Age Britain was the spear not the sword. Cassivellaunus, one could confidently assume, was well aware of the fighting capabilities of the Roman with their short thrusting swords. His knowledge of the Roman strengths, if not gained through the activities of 55BC when

Caesar fought the Cantiaci and Atrebates on the coast, would have come from the experience of Commius.

Commius had seen first hand the ability of the Roman soldier to defeat tribal armies in Gaul. This experience and knowledge would have been invaluable to Cassivellaunus when he planned his military actions. Caesar gave clear descriptions of the tribal warriors at war against the Roman, even describing the problems his soldiers faced.

Cassivellaunus' indirect tactics were based on the effectiveness of missile weapons and this style suited the chariots that were used by the Britons in war. The chariot was unique to Britain at the time of Caesar and Claudius' invasions, having died out as an element of Gallic warfare decades previously. The chariot functioned more as a solid platform from which to throw spear and javelin.

The throwing spear or javelin would be effective from these mobile platforms. The sword would be limited in its impact during combat until the warrior dismounted (if indeed they even did so). The sword may have been an effective cavalry weapon but was almost redundant in the hands of a chariot-riding warrior.

The evolution of the shield also gives strength to the argument that the spear was more the tribal weapon of choice over the sword. The larger shields would have given wider protection from missile weapons. The assumption that the primary weapon of tribal warriors in Britain was the spear as opposed to the sword needs further study, but there is much to support the theory that missile warfare suited indirect tactics that the tribal armies utilised in their response to Roman invasion.

The military campaigning of 60AD and the destruction of the Welsh resistance on Mona enabled Rome to extend the military frontier further westward and set about stabilising the northern client kingdom of the Brigantes that

had been building up to civil war based on pro and anti-Roman lines.

Despite the quick fall of the southeast, the stabilisation of the province of Britannia took seventeen years of hard campaigning that saw continued resistance within and beyond the frontier. The northern expansion of the Roman frontier and the final submission of the west are beyond the scope of this thesis, yet for the southeast, the ashes of Boudicca's revolt cooled as the people of Iron Age Britain settled into the *pax Romana* of the Empire.

Roman peace within the province of Britannia still required the stationing of four legion and supporting auxiliary units. These formations were required in the push northwards in 77AD under the capable leadership of Agricola.<sup>2</sup> The southeast remained militarily subdued for the next three hundred years.

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References Notes, Conclusion.

<sup>1</sup> Cunliffe. 1975, p. 308.

<sup>2</sup> Dupuy. p. 141.

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